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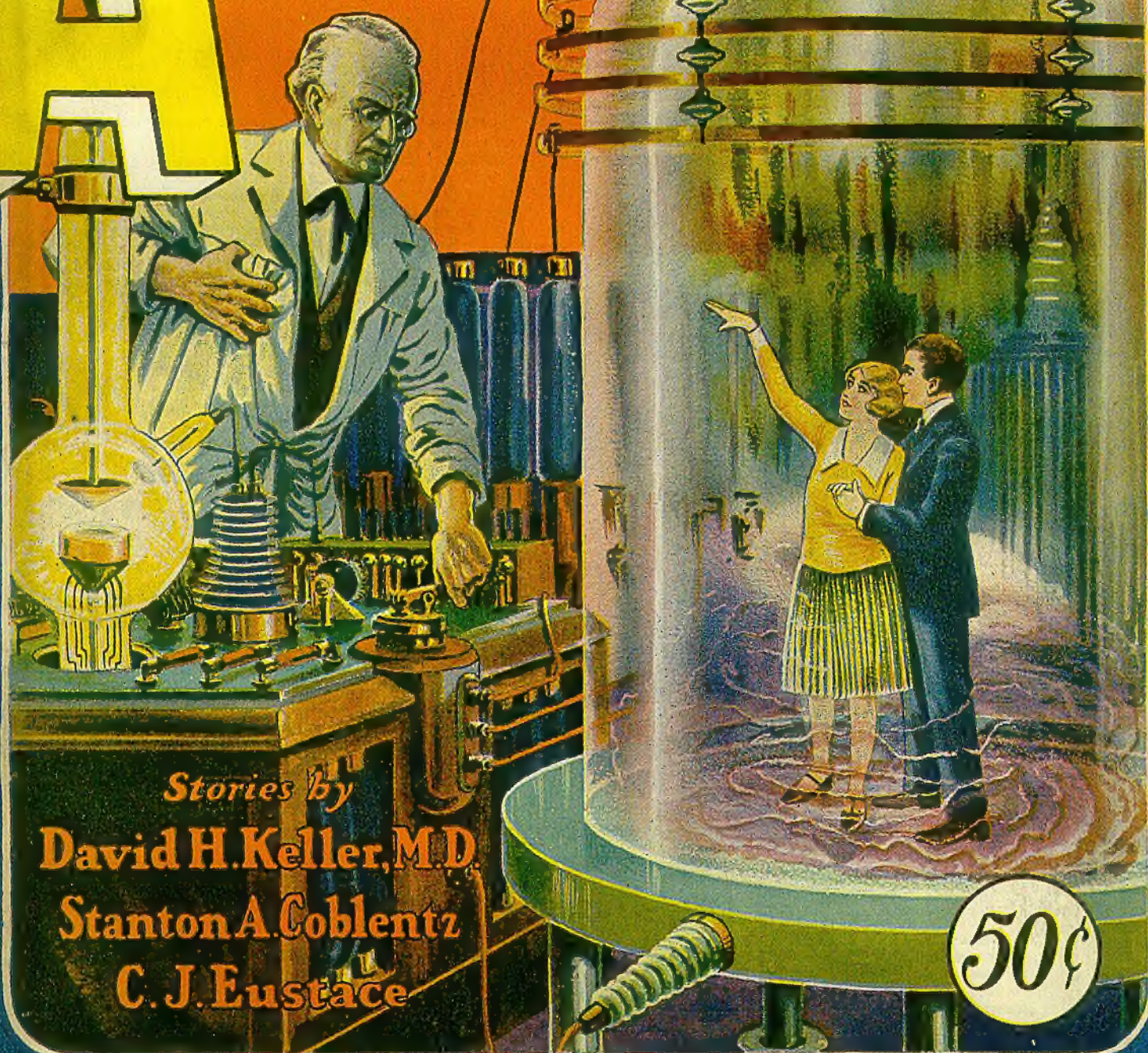
AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY

HUGO GERNSBACK
EDITOR



Stories by

David H. Keller, M.D.

Stanton A. Coblentz

C. J. Eustace

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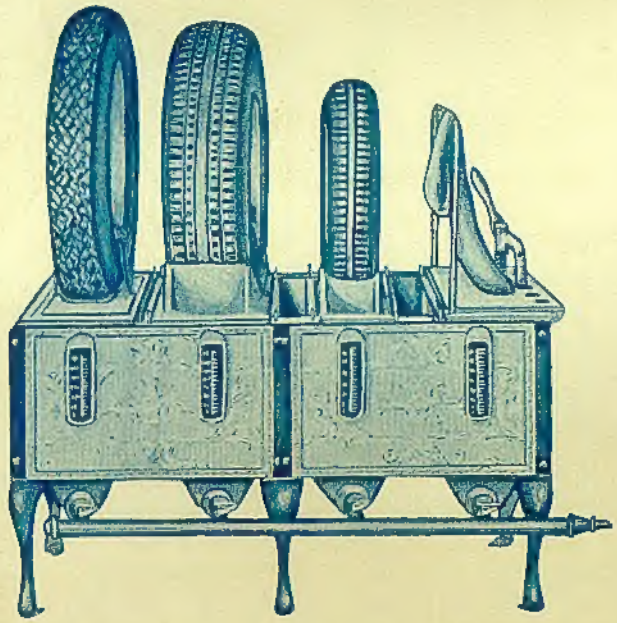

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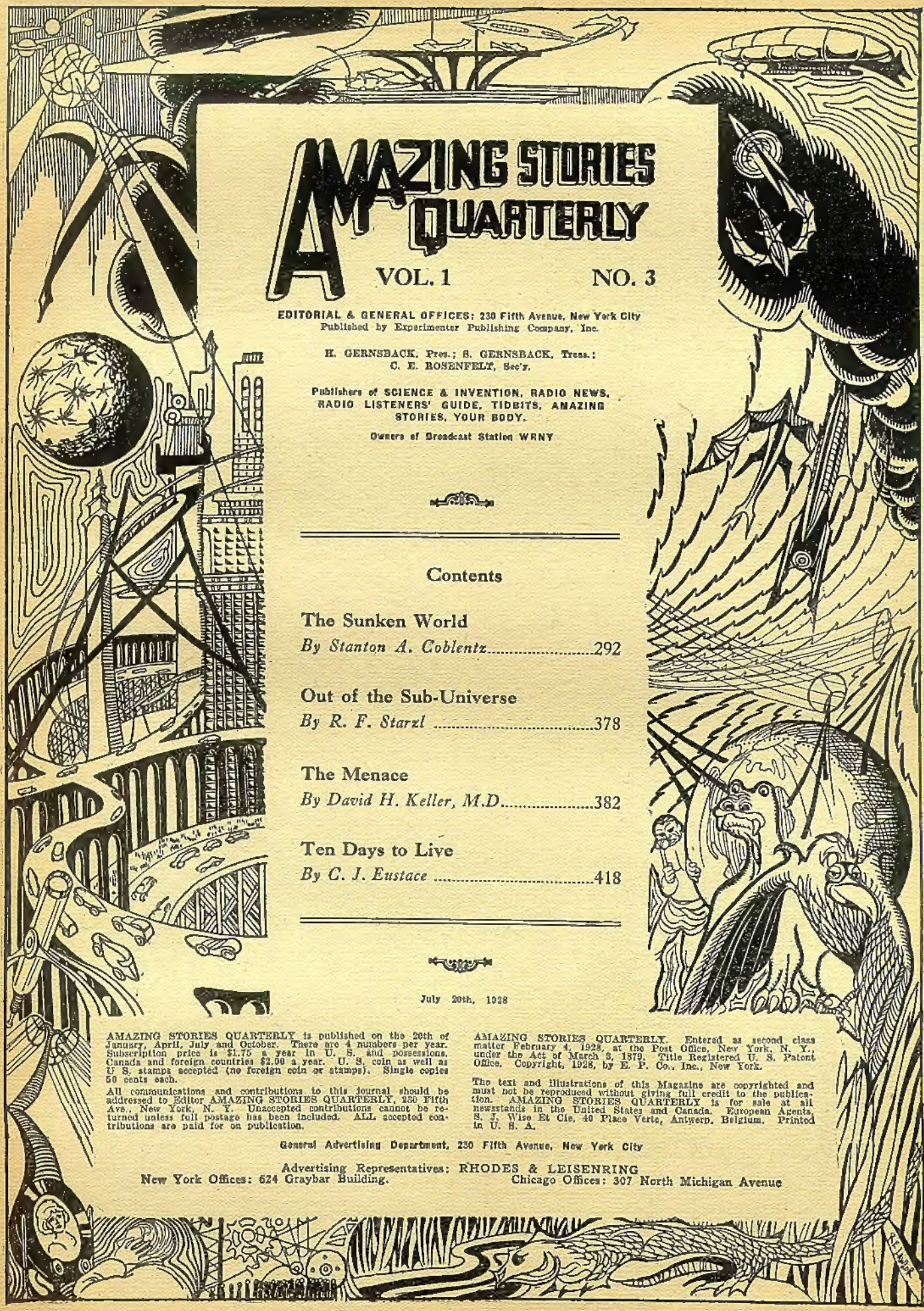

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July 20th, 1928

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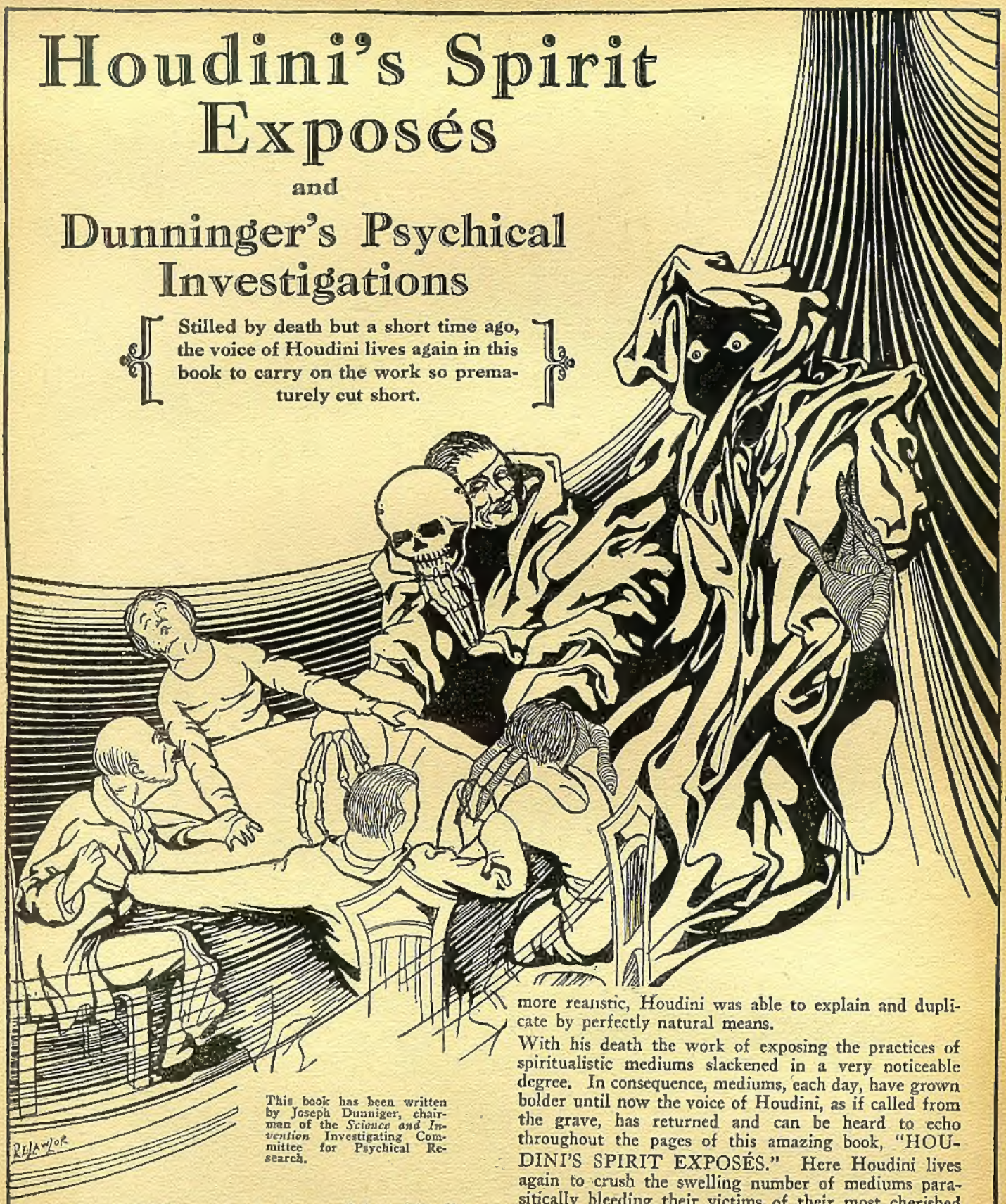
Houdini's Spirit Exposés

and

Dunninger's Psychical Investigations

Stilled by death but a short time ago, the voice of Houdini lives again in this book to carry on the work so prematurely cut short.



This book has been written by Joseph Dunniger, chairman of the *Science and Invention* Investigating Committee for Psychical Research.

HOUDINI was deeply interested in spiritualism. He spent years in the study of this fascinating subject. When he had fully mastered every angle, he turned his attention to exposing the fraudulent practices of mediums. Mysterious voices in the air, unearthly tappings on the table, weirdly moving furniture, floating figures, hands, lights—every trick employed by mediums in order to make their séances more realistic, Houdini was able to explain and duplicate by perfectly natural means.

With his death the work of exposing the practices of spiritualistic mediums slackened in a very noticeable degree. In consequence, mediums, each day, have grown bolder until now the voice of Houdini, as if called from the grave, has returned and can be heard to echo throughout the pages of this amazing book, "HOUDINI'S SPIRIT EXPOSÉS." Here Houdini lives again to crush the swelling number of mediums parasitically bleeding their victims of their most cherished possessions while posing in the guise of the living dead.

All should read this tremendously interesting book. The entire treatise has been written from the personal notes of Houdini—a startling exposé on one of the biggest frauds of the day. Do not fail to get your copy—112 pages—fully illustrated.

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Vol. 1
No. 3

SUMMER
1928

AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY

HUGO GERNSBACK, *Editor*
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Dr. T. O'CONOR SLOANE, Ph.D., *Asso. Editor* C. A. BRANDT, *Literary Editor*
Editorial and General Offices: 230 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

$50.00 FOR A LETTER

By Hugo Gernsback

THE publishers of this magazine want you to feel that this is your magazine, and the editors invite you to take an active interest in this publication.

Of course, the hundreds of letters which come pouring in to the QUARTERLY every month testify to this interest, but beginning with the next —the Fall issue of the QUARTERLY, we wish to inaugurate a new feature. We will pay $50.00 for a single letter for every succeeding issue, until further notice.

The editors realize that, this being your publication, you, the reader, have certain ideas, not only about this publication, but about scientifiction as well. Accordingly the publishers will pay $50.00 for the best editorial written by one of its readers, to be published in subsequent issues of AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY.

The editors believe that their mission is complete when they have selected and edited stories that go into the making of this magazine.

On the other hand, they feel that you, the reader, have a more detached view of the magazine itself, and that very often, your ideas as to the magazine, and as to scientifiction in general, are not only unique, but original and instructive as well. For that reason, it has been decided to choose the best letter which can be used as an editorial for this page, in future issues.

What is wanted then for the editorial page, is a letter or manuscript of about 500 words to fill this page. The subject of the editorial may be the contents of the magazine itself, or better, it may be a theme on scientifiction, which, of course, has many angles. The best letter will be awarded a prize of $50.00 and will be printed on the editorial page.

The letters which do not win the QUARTERLY prize, but which still have merit, may be printed in the *Discussions* Department or elsewhere in the magazine, at the discretion of the editors.

As your entry for this editorial page, kindly note that no letters of criticisms of authors and stories can be accepted. These properly belong in the *Discussions* Department. Then again, laudatory letters containing flattering remarks about the stories themselves, or of the magazine, are not acceptable for the editorial page, as letters of this type also belong in the *Discussions* Department.

What is wanted, therefore, are inspiring or educational letters, embodying material which can be used as an editorial along scientifiction themes. It should be a simple matter for any reader of this publication to compose a short article or letter of this kind.

We hope there will be sufficient good material received between now and the Fall issue, and we hope to print a first class editorial then.

Remember, it is the idea that counts. A great literary effort is not necessary, as the editors reserve the right to edit all letters received, in order to make them more presentable for publication.

Remember, too, that anyone can enter this contest, and everyone has an equal chance to get on the editorial page of AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY hereafter.

Please note, that contest for the next issue closes on September 15.

Now let's see what YOU can do.

The Next Issue of the Quarterly Will Be on the Newsstands October 20th

The SUNKEN WORLD

By Stanton A. Coblentz

IT was in the spring of 1918 that the United States submarine X-111 was launched upon its adventurous career. The German commerce raiders had now reached the height of their effectiveness; almost daily they were taking their toll of luckless seamen and provision-laden steamers; and the United States government, in alarm that was never officially admitted, had resolved upon desperate measures. The result was the X-111. The first of a fleet of undersea craft, this vessel was constructed upon lines never before attempted. Not only was it exceedingly long (being about two hundred feet from stem to stern), but it was excessively narrow, and a man had to be short indeed to stand upright within it on its single deck without coming into contact with the arching ceiling. The ship, in fact, was nothing more nor less than a long pipe-like tube of reinforced steel, able to cleave the water at tremendous speed and ram and destroy any enemy by ramming it with its beak-like prow. But this was only its slightest point of novelty. At both ends and at several points along the sides it was equipped with water-piercing searchlights of a power never before known (the creation of Walter Tamrock, the Kansas inventor who lost his life in the war); and it was provided with a series of air-tight and water-proof compartments, any one of which might be pierced without seriously injuring the vessel as a whole. Hence the X-111 was generally known as unsinkable, and upon it the American officials fastened their hopes of abating the nuisance of the enemy "U-boat."

THE world of literature is full of Atlantis stories, but we are certain, that there has never been a story written with the daring and with such originality as to approach "The Sunken World."

Science is pretty well convinced today, that there was an Atlantis many thousands of years ago. Just exactly what became of it, no one knows. The author, in this story, which no doubt will become a classic some day, has approached the subject at a totally different angle than has ever been attempted before; and let no one think that the idea, daring and impossible as it would seem at first, is impossible. Nor is it at all impossible that progress and science goes and comes in waves. It may be possible that millions of years ago, the world had reached a much higher culture than we have today. Electricity and radio, and all that goes with it, may have been well known eons ago, only to be swept away and rediscovered. Every scientist knows, that practically every invention is periodically rediscovered independently. It seems there is nothing new under the sun.

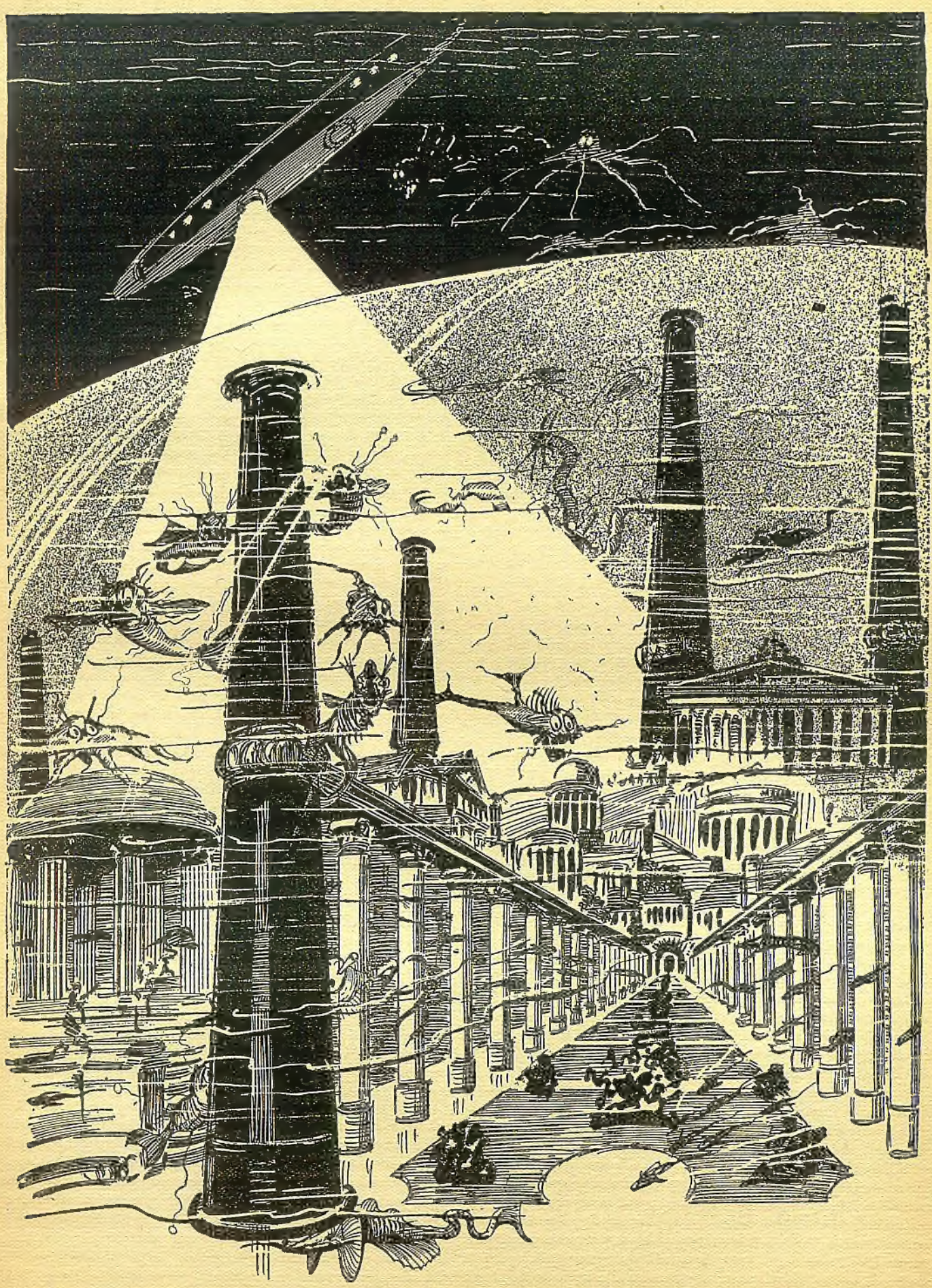
But the big idea behind the author's theme is the holding of present-day science and progress up to a certain amount of ridicule, and showing up our civilization in a sometimes grotesque mirror, which may not be always pleasing to our vanity and to our appraisal of our so-called present day achievements.

The point the author brings out is that it is one thing to have power in science and inventions, but that it is another thing to use that power correctly. He shows dramatically and vividly how it can be used and how it should be used.

From the technical standpoint, this story is tremendous, and while some of our critics, will, as usual, find fault with the hydraulics contained in this story, the fact remains they are not at all impossible.

The sinking of this "unsinkable" vessel is now of course a matter of history. Close observers of naval events will recall how, in May, 1918, the newspapers reported the disappearance of another United States submarine. All that was known with certainty was, that the ship had been commissioned to the danger zone; that it had failed to return to its base at the expected time, and that the passing days brought no news of it; that wireless messages and searching expeditions alike proved unavailing, and that it was two months before the only clue as to its fate was found. Then it was that a British destroyer, on scout duty in the North Sea, picked up a drifting life preserver bearing the imprint "X-111." For strategic reasons, this fact was not divulged until much later, and for strategic reasons it was not made known that the missing submarine was of a new and previously untried type; but the mystery of the X-111's disappearance weighed heavily upon the minds of naval officials, and secretly they resolved upon immediate and exhaustive investigation. All in vain. Not a trace of the lost ship or of the thirty-nine members of its crew could be found; not a scrap of the usual drifting flotsam or wreckage could be picked up anywhere on the sea; and at last it was admitted in despair that the waters would perhaps guard their secret forever.

Seven years went by. Peace had long since returned, and the X-111 and its tragedy had been forgotten except by a few relatives of the unfortunate thirty-nine. Then suddenly the mystery was fanned into vivid life again. A bearded man, with a strange greenish complexion and eyes that blinked oddly beneath wide, colored glasses, appeared at the offices of the Navy department at Washington and claimed to be one of the company of the X-111. At first, of course, he was merely laughed at as a madman, and could induce no one to listen to him seriously; but he was so persistent in his pleas, and so anxious to give proof of his identity, that a few began to suspect that there might be some shadow of truth to his claims after all. Half-heartedly, an investigation was undertaken—and with results that left the world gaping in amazement! The testimony of a dozen witnesses, as well as the unmistakable evidence of finger-prints and handwriting, proved that the wild-looking stranger



Then, as the searchlights swayed and shifted till they swept the depths directly beneath, we began to make out familiar objects amid the obscurity. . . . For a moment I observed nothing alarming. Then, as my gaze became focused upon a gray dome just below, I too cried out in dread realization . . . . Here and there a lantern-bearing object, with flapping finny body, went wavering through the windows and above the temple roofs!

was none other than Anson Harkness, Ensign on the ill-starred X-111, long mourned as dead. Now, for the first time, the truth about the disappearance of that remarkable vessel was to be made known; and the eager public was treated to a story so extraordinary that only irrefutable evidence could make it seem credible. It is safe to say that never, since Columbus returned to Spain with the news of his discoveries in seeking a western route to the far East, had any mariner delivered to his people a revelation so unexampled and marvelous.

But while numerous accounts of the great discovery are extant, and while the furore of discussion over the newspaper articles and interviews shows no sign of waning, the public has yet to read the tale in the words of Harkness himself. And it is for this reason that the accompanying history, to which Harkness has devoted himself ever since his return from exile, possesses a peculiar and timely interest. Harkness has described, unaffectedly and sincerely, the most perilous exploits which any man has ever survived. Hence the following pages should prove entertaining not only to the student of world events, but to that larger public which finds value in a rare and stirring bit of autobiography.

STANTON A. COBLENTZ,
(New York, 1928.)

CHAPTER I

Harkness Explains His Disappearance

THE maiden voyage of the X-111 was ill-fated from the first. Perhaps the new inventions had not yet been perfected, or perhaps, in the haste of wartime, adequate tests had not been made; at any rate, the vessel developed mechanical troubles after her first half day at sea. To begin with, the rudder and steering apparatus proved unmanageable; then, after hours spent in making repairs, the engines showed a tendency to balk under the tremendous speed we were ordered to maintain; and finally, when we had about solved the engine problem, we had the misfortune to collide with a half-submerged derelict, while running on the surface, and one of our water-tight compartments sprang a leak.

Immediately following the accident, we had risen to the surface, for the break was about on a level with our waterline, and the compartment could not be completely flooded so long as we did not submerge. Yet Captain Gavison warned us not to waste a moment, and the men worked with desperate speed to repair the damage, for we knew that we were in the zone of the German U-boat, and that any delay might prove perilous, if not fatal. Unfortunately, the sea was unusually calm and the day was blue and clear, so that even our low-lying hulk could be sighted many miles across the waters.

I do not know precisely at what position we were then stationed, except that it was somewhere in the Eastern Atlantic, and at a point where, according to the warnings of our Secret Service, a concentration of German submarines was to be expected. At any other time we would have welcomed the opportunity to come to grips with the foe; but now, in our disabled condition, we kept a lookout with grave misgivings, and silently prayed that the damage might be repaired before the enemy slunk into view. Yet it was slow work to man the pumps and at the same time to weld a strip of metal across the jagged gap in our side; and hours passed while we stood there working thigh-deep in water, our heads bent low, for there was but two or three feet of breathing space beneath the curved iron ceiling. Suppressed growls and curses came from our lips each time a sudden surge of the waters interfered with the welding. Meanwhile all was in confusion; the men worked with the feverish inefficiency of terror, scarcely heeding the orders of the officers; the chief contents of the compartment floated about almost unnoted. I distinctly remember that several articles, including a life preserver which one of the recruits had unfastened in his fright, were washed overboard.

Still, we did make some progress, and after four or five hours, and just as the blood-red sun was sinking low in the west, we found our task nearing completion. A few more minutes, and the welding would be accomplished; a few more minutes, and darkness would be upon us, leaving us free from fear of attack for the next eight or ten hours.

It was just when we felt safest that the real danger presented itself. A swift trail of white shot across the waters far to westward, and, advancing at full speed, vanished in a long, frothy furrow just in our wake. "A German U-boat! A U-boat two points off the port bow!" frantically cried the watch; and we scrambled from the flooded compartment as the Captain gave the order "Submerge!" Now we heard the rapid churning of our engines as we went plunging into the blackness beneath the sea; now we made ready to launch a torpedo of our own as our periscope showed us the disappearing tip of an enemy submarine; now we were hurled into an exciting chase as our prodigiously powerful searchlights illumined whole leagues of the water, even revealing the dark, cigar-shaped hulk of the foe. Had we not been impeded by the dead weight of a compartment full of water, we would unquestionably have overtaken the enemy, rammed it and ended its career; even as it was, we seemed to be gaining upon it, and we had hopes of shooting up unseen and bullet-like from the dark, and with tremendous impact smiting it in two. Not even the unexpected appearance of a second submarine altered our plans. Handicapped as we were, we would show our superiority to both the enemy craft!

But it was at this point that mechanical troubles again betrayed us. Overworked by our excessive burst of speed, our engines (which were of the super-electric type recently invented by Cogswell) gave signs of slowing up and stopping; and so dangerously overheated were they, that our Captain had to halt our vessel abruptly, almost within striking distance of the foe. Our position became extremely precarious, for at any moment the German searchlights might spy us out, and a few undersea bombs might send us to the bottom.

As our own equipment had purposely been made as light as possible, we were provided with no explosive shells other than torpedoes: hence we were compelled to rise to the surface in order to attack. This, we realized, was a hazardous expedient, since both the enemy vessels were already in a position to answer our bombardment, volley for volley. But trusting to the gathering darkness and to our aggressive tactics to win us the advantage, we unhesitatingly rose to the level, and, with as little delay as possible, discharged a torpedo toward the dim-low-lying form of the foe.

Whether that projectile reached its goal, none of us will ever be able to say. From the sudden, furious eruption of spray in the direction of the enemy craft, I am inclined to believe that this was among the U-boats later reported missing; yet, the torpedo may

merely have struck some floating object and so have lost its prey. Whatever the results, we were unable to observe with certainty, for at the same moment a gleaming streak shot toward us across the dark waters, and the next instant we went sprawling about the deck as a dull thudding crash came to our ears and the vessel shook and wavered as though in an earthquake's grip. Half dazed from the shock, we gathered ourselves together and rose uncertainly to our feet, staring at one another in dull consternation. And at the same moment one of the seamen burst wildly into the cabin, despair and terror in his maddened eyes. "The central compartment!" he cried. "The central compartment. It's flooded, all flooded!" And as if to prove his words, we felt ourselves sinking, sinking slowly, though we had not been ordered to submerge; the darkness of the twilight skies quickly gave way to the darkness beneath the ocean.

IT was some minutes before we quite realized what was happening. Accustomed as we were to undersea traveling, we did not at first understand that this was an adventure quite out of the ordinary. Even when the waters had lost their first pale translucency and had become utterly black and opaque, we did not realize our terrible predicament. Only after our vessel began listing violently, and we felt the deck sloping at an angle of forty-five degrees, did we recognize the full horror of our position. Although we could see not one inch beyond the thick glass portholes, I had an indefinable sense that we were sinking, sinking down, down, down through vague and unknown abysses; and the stark and helpless terror on the assembled faces gave proof that the others shared my feelings. Not a word did we utter. Indeed, speaking would not have been easy, for a low, continuous roaring was in our ears, a hoarse, muffled roaring reminding me of the murmuring in a sea-shell. At the same time, a strange depression overwhelmed my senses; it seemed as though the atmosphere had suddenly become thick and heavy, too heavy for breathing; it seemed as though an unnatural weight had been piled upon me, threatening to crush and stifle me. Yet I did notice that the vessel quivered violently and lunged upward every few seconds, in a furious effort to right itself and rise to the surface. I did fancy that I heard the buzzing of the engines at times, an intermittent buzzing that was most disquieting; and I found myself, like the others, hanging to the brass railings to steady myself when the ship heaved and shuddered, or to keep my footing when we slanted downward.

Perhaps five minutes passed when the door leading forward was thrust open, and Captain Gavison climbed precariously into the room. All eyes were bent upon him in silent inquiry; but his grim, stoically firm countenance was far from reassuring. It was apparent that he had something to say, and that he did not care to say it; and several anxious moments elapsed while he stood glowering upon us, evidently undecided whether to give his message words.

Yet even at this crisis he could not forget discipline. His first words brought us no information, and his first action was to station us about the room in orderly fashion, assigning each to some specific duty.

"I will not keep the facts from you," he declared, with slow, deliberate accentuation, when finally we were all in position. "Three of our compartments are flooded. The other compartments seem to be holding out as yet, but the great mass of water in our hold is bearing us rapidly downward, and the engines seem unable to neutralize the effect. At the last reading, we were nine hundred and twenty-seven feet below sea level."

"Great God! What are we to do about it?" I gasped, in biting terror.

"Suggestions are in order," stated the Captain, laconically.

But no suggestion was forthcoming.

"Of course, we are in no immediate danger . . ." he resumed. But he might have spared his words. Most of us had had sufficient experience of undersea travel to know that the danger was real enough. Barring the remote contingency that the engines would be brought back into efficient working order, there were only two possibilities. On the one hand, we might reach the bottom of the sea, and, stranded there, would perish of starvation or slow suffocation. Or, in the second place, we might continue drifting downward until the tremendous pressure of the water, proving too strong even for the stout steel envelope of our vessel, would bend and crush it like an egg-shell.

Although we could no longer guide our course, our gigantic searchlights were at once brought into play, piercing the water with brilliant yellow streamers. Yet they might have been searchlights in a tomb, for they showed us nothing except the minute wavy dark shapes that occasionally drifted in and out of our line of vision. There was something ghastly, I thought, about that light, that intense unearthly sallow light, which glided slowly in long curves and spirals about the thick enveloping darkness. And the very penetrating power of the rays served only to accentuate the horror. For the illumination ended in nothingness; nothingness seemed to stretch above us, beneath us, and to all sides of us; we were enfolded in it as in a black mantle; it seemed to be stretching out long arms to fetter us, to gather us up, to strangle us slyly.

SLOWLY, with agonizing slowness, the moments crept by; slowly we continued sinking, down, down, down, ever down and down, with movement gradual and constantly diminishing, yet never ceasing. Never before in history, we told ourselves, had living men been plunged so far beneath the ocean. Our instruments recorded first twelve hundred feet, then fourteen, then sixteen, then eighteen hundred feet below sea level!

And as we sank downward, we became aware that we were not the only living creatures in these depths. Our searchlights made us the center of attraction for myriads of scaly things; whole schools and squadrons of fishes were gathering moth-like in the vivid illumination thrown out by our vessel. Some were long, snaky monsters, with thin heads set with rows of spike-like teeth, and tiny eyes that gleamed evilly in the uncanny light; some were lithe sea dragons, with wolfish mouths and sabre-like bony appendages projecting from low foreheads; some were many-colored, rainbow-hued or streaked with black and golden, or red and azure, or yellow and white; some had chameleon eyes that flashed first green and then blue, according to the play of the light about them; many were flitting to and fro, circling and spiralling and doubling back and forth at incredible speed; and not a few, unacquainted with the ways of submarines, collided full-tilt with the thick glass of our portholes.

But as our depth gradually increased, our finny visitors began to give way to others stranger still. When we were twenty-two hundred feet below the surface, the searchlights were no longer necessary to reveal the denizens of the deep, for the inhabitants of those unthinkable regions carried their own lamps! And how they amazed us and startled us!—how, in

our shuddering nerve-racking terror, they appeared to us as ghosts or avenging fiends, or struck our overworked imaginations as approaching foes or rescuers! Suddenly, out of the deathly blackness, a spurt of green light appeared, swiftly widening until it seemed an unearthly searchlight—and, from a narrow focus of flame, two huge burning green eyes would shoot forth, darting cold malice at us through the glass port, until the yellow electric light would seem tinged with an emerald reflection. Or else a tiny flattened disk, softly phosphorescent throughout and marked on one surface by two bright beady eyes, would come floating in our direction like a pale apparition; or, again, a long dark rod, brilliantly white like a living flashlight, would dart curving and gleaming toward us out of the remote gloomy depths. But more terrifying than any of these were the nameless monsters with invisible bodies and lidless, fiery yellow eyes of the size of baseballs,—eyes that stared in at us, and stared and stared, as though all the concentrated horror of the universe were glaring upon us, seeking to ferret us out and mark us for its victims.

And still we were sinking, unceasingly sinking, till the last faint hope had died in the heart of the most sanguine, and in despair and with half-mumbled phrases we admitted that there could be no rescue for us. When we were twenty-five hundred feet below the surface, the fury of expectation had given place to a blank and settled despondency; when the distance was twenty-eight hundred feet, each was striving in his own way to prepare himself for the fate which all felt to be but a question of hours. In our panic-stricken horror, we had all long ago forgotten the positions assigned us by the Captain; and the Captain himself did not appear to notice where we were. Young Rawson, the newest of the recruits, had gone down on his knees, and with tears in his eyes was murmuring half audible prayers; Matthew Stangale, one of the oldest and most hardened of the seamen, was pacing restlessly back and forth, back and forth, in the narrow compartment, clenching his fists furiously and muttering to himself; Daniel Howlett, veteran of many campaigns, contented himself with a suppressed growling and profanity, and his curses were echoed by his companions; Frank Ripley, a college gridiron hero, enlisted for the war, buried himself in a corner of the room, his face covered by his hands, the very picture of dejection, though every once in a while, wistfully and half-furtively, he would let his gaze travel to a little photograph he guarded close to his bosom. And as for Captain Gavison, on whom we had fastened our last fading hope of escape—he merely stood near the porthole with arms clenched behind his back and thin lips tightly compressed, peering out into the black waters as though he read there some secret hidden from the obtuse gaze of his followers.

WE were below the three thousand foot level when fresh cause for anxiety appeared. "The holy saints have mercy on us!" suddenly exclaimed James Stranahan, one of the common seamen, as he crossed himself piously. And pointing in awe-stricken amazement through one of the glass spy-holes which led from the deck, down through the bottom of the ship, he called attention to a dim shimmering luminescence far below. Excitedly we crowded about him, almost tumbling over one another in our eagerness and terror, but for a moment we could see nothing. Then, slowly, as we stood straining our eyes to fathom the blackness, we became aware of a vague filmy, widespread sheet of light twinkling faintly beneath us, and remote as the stars of an inverted Milky Way.

A sheet of light beneath us, at the bottom of the sea! In incredulous astonishment, we turned to one another, scarcely able to believe our senses, our horror written plainly in our gaping eyes! And in silence, and with fear-blanched faces, half of the company made the sign of the cross.

"Sure it's a ghost, a deep-sea ghost!" ventured the superstitious Stranahan.

"It's where the sea serpents have their home!" put in Stangale, with an abortive attempt to be jocular. "There's ten million of them down there, with devil's eyes of fire!"

"Maybe it's the Evil One himself!" suggested Stranahan, not content with a single guess. "What if it's the very throne-room of Hell, and them are the flames of Old Nick!"

These words did not seem to reassure the rest of the crew. Several were trembling visibly, and several continued to cross themselves in silence.

Meanwhile the Captain had ordered the searchlights turned downward, and in long loops and curves the cutting light swept the darkness beneath. But not a thing was visible, except for a few flapping fishy forms; and our lanterns served only to conceal the mysterious luminescence.

Yet, when the searchlights were again directed upward, that luminescence became more distinct and seemed to stretch to infinite distances on all sides. But it was still incalculably remote, and still filled us with alarm and foreboding. Whatever it was (and we could not help feeling that it was evil), we knew that it was a thing beyond the reach of all human experience; whatever it was, it was a monstrous thing, possibly malevolent and terrible, and not inconceivably ghostly and supernatural.

But as we continued to sink, I began to doubt whether any of us should live to solve the mystery. The air in our overcrowded compartments was becoming oppressively heavy and vitiated; we were like men locked in sealed vaults, and there was no possibility of renewing our exhausted oxygen supply. Already I was beginning to feel drowsy from the lack of air; my head was aching dully and I had almost ceased to care where we went or what befell us. Today, when I look back upon the racking events of those terrible hours, I feel sure that I was not far from delirium; and when I recall how some of my comrades reclined drunkenly on the floor, with half-hysterical mumblings and wailings, I am certain that there were but few of us, who retained our right senses.

There is, indeed, a blank space in my memory concerning what occurred at about this time; I may have fallen off into a doze or sodden slumber lasting for minutes or even for hours. I can only say that I have a recollection of coming abruptly to myself, as from a state of coma; and, with a sudden jolt of understanding, I realized where I was, and observed with a shock that half a dozen of my comrades were gathered together in a little group, pointing downward with excited exclamations.

Staggering to my feet, I joined them, and in a moment shared in their agitation. The lights beneath us were now far brighter—they no longer formed a vague shimmering screen, but were concentrated brilliantly in a score of golden globes of the apparent size of the sun. "Could it be that the ocean too has its suns?" I asked myself, as when one asks dazed questions in a dream. And looking at those spectral lights that wavered and gleamed through the pale translucent waters, I felt that this was surely but a nightmare from which I should soon awaken. Fantastic fish, with triangular glowing red heads and searchlight

eyes projected on slender tubes, darted before our windows in innumerable schools; but these seemed almost familiar now by comparison with those eerie golden lights below; and it was upon the golden illumination that my gaze was riveted as we settled slowly down and down. Soon it became apparent that the great central globes were not the only source of the radiance, for smaller points of light gradually became visible, some of them moving, actually moving as though borne by living hands!—and even the spaces between the lights seemed to wear an increasing golden luster! Yet with the golden was mingled a singular tinge of green, a green that seemed scarcely of the waters; and the mysterious depths were no longer black, but olive-hued, as though the light came filtering to us through some solid dark-green medium.

But a more imminent peril was to distract our attention from the weird lights. For some minutes I had been vaguely aware of something peculiar in the aspect of our compartment; yet, in my stupefied condition, I had not been able to determine just what was wrong. But full realization came to me when Stranahan, pointing upward, wide-eyed with horror, suddenly exclaimed, "Heaven preserve us, look at the ceiling!"

We all looked. The ceiling was bulging inches downward, as though the terrific pressure of the waters were already bursting the tough steel envelope of the X-111. And at the same time we observed that the deck we stood on, was bulging upward, and that the bulkheads were being twisted and distorted like iron rails warped by an earthquake.

BUT now came the greatest surprise of all. "By all the saints and little devils!" burst forth the irrepressible Stranahan, pointing downward and forgetting the aspect of the bulkheads and deck. "There's a city under the sea!"

"A city under the sea!" we echoed, in stupefied amazement. And from one corner of the room came a burst of hysterical laughter, which wavered and broke and then died out, sounding uncannily like a fiend's derision.

"But I tell you, there is a city under the sea!" insisted Stranahan, noting the incredulous stares with which we regarded him. "The Lord strike me dead if I didn't see its streets and houses!"

Though none of us doubted but that the Lord would indeed do as Stranahan suggested, we interpreted his remarks as mere delirious ravings, and continued to stare at him in petrified silence.

"You see, there she is!" persisted the seaman, still pointing downward regardless of our disbelief. And, crossing himself piously, he continued, in awed tones, "May the Virgin have pity on us, if that don't look like a church!"

Stranahan's last words had such a tone of conviction that, though our doubts were still strong, we could not forebear to look. And, after a single glance, our scepticism gave place to dumbfounded amazement. For was this not a city staring up at us from the green-golden depths? Or at least the ruins of what had been a city? In outlines wavy because of the dense, shifting waters, and yet as definite of form as reflections in a still pool, half a dozen great yellow-white temples seemed to glimmer beneath the brilliant lights, with massive columns, wide-reaching porticoes and colonnades, and gracefully curving arches and domes.

Was this but a mirage?—we asked ourselves. Or

Our searchlights made us the center of attraction for myriads of scaly things; whole schools and squadrons of fishes were gathering moth-like in the vivid illumination thrown out by our vessel . . . flitting to and fro, circling and spiralling and doubling back and forth at incredible speed.

were these the remains of some submerged, ancient town? Never had we heard of mirages beneath the sea—but if this were a dead city, then why these vivid lights? And, certainly, no living city could be imagined in these profound watery abysses.

Even as we wondered, we seemed to note a gradual change in our movement. We were no longer sinking; we were drifting with slow motion, almost horizontally; and just beneath us appeared to be an impenetrable but transparent dense, greenish wall, a wall that—had the idea not been too preposterous—we might almost have imagined to be of glass. Beneath this wall gleamed no lantern-bearing, fishy eyes, but the dazzling golden orbs and the smaller scattered lights shone steadily with piercing radiance; and beneath us, at a distance that may have been five hundred feet and may have been a thousand, the vaults and domes and columns of innumerable stone edifices shone palely and with sallow luster. Surely, we thought, this was some unheard-of Athens, doomed long ago by tidal wave or volcano.

Gradually, for some reason that we could not quite explain, our horizontal motion seemed to be increasing; and, caught apparently by some rapid deep-sea current, we drifted with appreciable velocity above those dim realms of green and golden. Palace after magnificent palace, many seemingly modelled by architects of old Greece, went gliding by beneath us; countless statues, tall as the buildings, pointed up at us with hands that were uncannily life-like; wide avenue after wide avenue flashed by, and one or two colossal theatres of old Grecian design; but no living thing was to be seen, or, at least, so it seemed, for though we strained our eyes, we could discern only shadows moving in those uncertain depths, only shadows and an occasional firefly light which zigzagged fitfully among the buildings and which we took to be some strange illuminated finny thing.

Then suddenly, for no apparent reason, fresh terror seized us. Perhaps it was because we realized abruptly the full eerie horror of floating thus above a city of the dead; perhaps it was that the whole unspeakable ghastliness of the adventure had again flashed upon us. Be that as it may, we began to shake and shiver once more as though in the grip of a mastering emotion, or as though obsessed by forethought of approaching disaster; and muttered prayers again were heard, and more than one silent tear was shed.

But the time for tears and prayers was over. Our motion, gradually increasing for some minutes, was suddenly accelerated as if by some gigantic prod; we seemed caught in some mighty movement of the waters, some maelstrom that whirled us about and buffeted us like a feather; a hoarse, continuous thunder dinned in our ears, and we went shooting forward with prodigious speed. Then came a violent jerk, and we found ourselves tossed pellmell to all corners of the room; then another jerk, and we were flung back again like dice shaken in a box; then still another jerk, more vehement than the others, and our terrorized minds lost track of events as our vessel lunged and heaved, then veered and stood almost on end, then began to spin round and round, like a swift gyrating top . . . And in that whirling confusion our senses reeled and grew blurred, and darkness came clouding back, darkness and sleep and nothingness . . .

CHAPTER II
Untraveled Depths

HOW any of us chanced to survive is more than I can say. In the turbulence and vertigo of that last blind roaring moment, I had vaguely felt that we had reached the end of all things; hence it was almost with surprise that I found myself hazily regaining consciousness, and discovered that I could still move my limbs and open my eyes. At first, indeed, I had the dim sense that I was dead and embarking upon the Afterlife; and it was only the definite sensation of pain in my bruised arms and legs, and the definite sight of my comrades tumbled about in ungainly attitudes, which convinced me that I was still on the better known side of the grave.

"Sure, and I thought we went through the very gates of Hell!" came a familiar voice; and Stranahan rose unsteadily to his feet, lugubriously nursing a sprained wrist. "By all the saints in heaven, we must be a devilish lot! The devil himself didn't seem able to get us!"

Cheered by sound of a human voice, I followed Stranahan's example, and slowly and painfully arose. I was thankful to learn that, although badly battered, I had suffered no broken bones; and as my comrades one by one staggered up from the deck, I was glad to observe that none were gravely injured.

Our vessel had assumed a horizontal position again, but I felt that our surroundings were strangely altered. While a pale luminescence seemed to transfuse the waters on both sides and above us, yet below us the golden lights were no longer visible, and everything seemed impenetrably black.

Of course, the Captain again ordered the searchlights turned on—and this time with extraordinary results. Just beneath us, actually in contact with the bottom of the X-111, a flat, sandy reach of ground was visible—certainly, the bottom of the sea! But this fact was the least remarkable of all. On both sides of us, at distances possibly of two hundred yards, a high and geometrically regular embankment shot up precipitously, ending in a yellow illuminated patch of water whose nature we could scarcely surmise. The one thing apparent was that we were in a submarine channel, a sort of river bed in the bottom of the sea. This fact was made evident by a current which sent us skimming along the soft sands although our engines had long since ceased to supply us with power.

"I can't understand it!" sighed Captain Gavison, shaking his head dolefully. "I can't understand it at all! For twenty-five years I've studied the ocean currents, but I've never before heard of anything like this!"

Just at this point our searchlights showed us a long, lithe dark form gliding rapidly by through the waters perhaps fifty feet above. It was as large as the largest known shark, but was shaped like no fish I had ever seen, tapering to a slender, canoe-like point at both ends; and, as it passed, the water seemed to foam and bubble strangely in its wake.

"Perdition take me, if it ain't a sea dragon!" ventured Stranahan, who had to have his say.

"Stranahan, be silent!" snapped the Captain, in high irritation. "You're always saying the wrong thing at the wrong time!"

"Yes, sir," admitted Stranahan, meekly, a grave expression in his pale blue eyes.

"If you want to make yourself useful, Stranahan," continued the Captain severely, although with less asperity than before, "go forward, and find out how far we are beneath sea level."

"Aye, aye, sir," agreed Stranahan, remembering to salute.

"How far below were we at the last reading, sir?" I inquired of the Captain, after Stranahan had vanished through the small compartment door.

"Thirty-seven hundred feet," returned the officer, abruptly. "But we've sunk considerably since then."

It was at this juncture that Stranahan reappeared in the doorway, a stare of blank, incredulous astonishment on his lean, hardened face.

"Well?" the Captain demanded. "How far below are we now?"

Stranahan mopped his brow as if to wipe off an invisible perspiration. But he answered not a word.

"Stranahan," growled the exasperated officer, somewhat after the manner of a schoolma'am to an unruly pupil, "do you hear me? I'm asking to know how far below we are now."

"Well, sir," drawled Stranahan, saluting mechanically, "wouldn't I be telling you if I knew? But, saints in heaven, sir, that machine must be bewitched! Else I'm seeing things!"

"Didn't you notice the reading?" bawled the Captain.

"Yes, sir," Stranahan replied, humbly. That's what the trouble is, sir."

"Then how far below are we?"

Stranahan hesitated as though he would rather not speak. "Forty-four feet," he muttered, at length.

A murmur of suppressed excitement passed from end to end of the room. "Forty-four feet!" yelled the Captain. "You mean forty-four hundred!"

"No, sir," maintained Stranahan, quietly. "I mean forty-four."

THE Captain's anger became uncontrollable. "Stranahan, you must take me for a fool!" he shouted. "This is not the moment for practical jokes! At any other time I'd have you thrown in the brig!"

"But, sir——" Stranahan started to protest.

"That's enough!" roared the officer, fairly shaking with fury. And, turning to one of the younger men, he commanded, "Ripley, see how far below water level we are!"

"Aye, aye, sir," assented Ripley, and left the room.

A moment later he returned with a sheepish grin on his face.

"Well, how far below are we?" demanded the Captain.

But Ripley, like Stranahan, seemed reluctant to speak. He coughed, gasped, stammered out an unintelligible syllable or two, cleared his throat, stood gaping at us stupidly while we looked on expectantly, and finally blurted out, "Forty—— forty-three feet, sir!"

"Forty-three feet!" bellowed the Captain. "Has the whole crew gone crazy?"

And, without further ado, Gavison himself went lunging toward the door, and disappeared in the forward compartment.

It was several minutes before he returned. But when he rejoined us, his face wore a look of undisguised amazement. Furtively and almost shamefacedly he peered at us, like one who fancies he is losing his wits.

"Well, sir, how far below are we now?" I questioned.

The Captain cleared his throat, and hesitated perceptibly before replying. "I—— I really don't know. I can't understand—— I can't understand it at all. If the instruments aren't out of order, we're exactly forty-two feet below!"

I gasped stupidly; then suggested, "No doubt, sir, the instruments are out of order."

"They are not!" denied the Captain. "I've tested them!"

Again the Captain hesitated briefly; then abruptly he resumed, "Besides, as you know, there are two instruments. They both record forty-two feet. Surely, they can't both be wrong in exactly the same way."

There ensued a moment of silence, during which we stared dully at one another, filled with mute questionings we would not dare to put into words.

"But how do you explain——" I at length started to inquire.

"I don't explain at all!" interrupted the officer. "We're simply running counter to all natural laws! According to all estimates, we should be nearly a mile deep by now!"

And the Captain stood stroking his chin in grave perplexity. Then turning suddenly to us all, he remarked, "I can't see how it can be true, boys; but if we're only forty-two feet deep, then maybe the engines will have life enough in them to pull us out. At least, it's a chance worth taking."

Half an hour later, after a few instructions and the assignment of the crew to duty, we had the pleasure of hearing once more the churning and throbbing of the engines. At first it promised to be a barren pleasure indeed, for the abused machinery gasped and sputtered as though determined upon a permanent strike; but finally after many vain efforts, we were greeted by the continuous buzzing of the motors. Then we found ourselves slowly moving, at first scarcely faster than the current, but with gradually increasing velocity; and by degrees we felt the deck taking on an upward slope as the nose of the vessel was pointed toward the surface of the waters. It was not an easy pull, for our three flooded compartments were powerfully inclined to hold us to the bottom; and in the beginning we made very little progress; several times we felt our hull scraping the ocean floor. Eventually, the engines, waxing to their full power, began to cleave the water at gratifying speed, and we found that we were moving definitely, though slowly upward.

Of course, hope came to us then in a powerful wave, accompanied by black flashes of despair, for what if impassable thousands of feet of water still rolled above us? Impatiently we fastened our eyes on the pressure gauges, and impatiently watched the registered distance dwindle from forty feet to thirty-five, from thirty-five to thirty, from thirty to twenty-five, and from twenty-five to twenty! And now, in a sudden wild burst of joy, we realized that probably we were saved! A pale but unmistakable radiance was seeping in through the glass ports, a radiance far more distinct and reassuring than the eerie luminescence we had noticed before. Certainly, this was the sunlight—and in a few moments we might bask again in the warmth of day!

And as we rose from twenty feet to fifteen, and from fifteen to ten, our hopes found increasing fuel. The light filtering in through the windows brightened at a rate that was more than heartening—and through the clear waters, even without the aid of the searchlights, we could distinguish a steep embankment, perhaps fifty or a hundred yards away. And just above us, almost within grasping distance, we thought we could notice the line where water met air!

But we had no intimation of the surprise that lay in store for us. Today, as I look back upon those events with clear perspective, it seems incredible to me that we could actually have expected to escape at once to the upper world. But hope had doubtless blinded our eyes and suffering blunted our perceptions, so that we could not understand that we were at the beginning, rather than at the end of our adventures.

SUDDENLY, with a furious lunge and an unwonted, violent burst of speed, we found ourselves

launched upward toward the wavy, light-shot level that was our goal; and now a blinding brilliance was upon us, and for a moment we had to shade our eyes to shield them from the dazzling change. Then, when by degrees we were able to glance again about us, we found that we were on the surface of the waters, actually on the surface!—but where was this that we had come up? and in what strange and unmapped continent? There was scarcely one of us that could suppress a cry of astonishment—we were afloat, not upon the ocean, as we had expected, but rather on a wide and rapidly flowing river—a river that washed no shores, ever described by human tongue! Altogether, it was one of the weirdest and most magnificent lands imaginable; on both sides of the stream spread a flat plain, dotted with great sea shells and greenish boulders, which in their turn were interspersed with a mossy brown vegetation and pale, graceful flowers like waterlilies on solitary stalks. At measured intervals, as far as the eye could reach, were colossal stone columns, enriched with pastel tintings of pink and blue; and these shot upward hundreds of feet as though supporting some titanic dome, ending, unaccountably, in a dark, green sky from which glared several sun-like, golden orbs, which suffused the scene in a mellow, unearthly luster that was beautiful, yet terrifying and ghostly.

Rubbing our eyes, like children still not half awake, we gazed at this fantastic, lovely spectacle. Not a word did we speak; we could not have found language to voice our amazement. Only the Captain, out of the whole thirty-nine of us, retained some measure of self-possession; and though, as he afterwards confessed, he was so dazzled that he spoke and acted mechanically, he did retain the presence of mind to order our vessel steered to shore and anchored.

It is still a marvel to me that we had the energy to carry out these commands. Somehow we brought the X-111 to land; and somehow, after several false starts, we managed to moor the ship to a large boulder in a sort of miniature bay.

And then Stranahan proved again that he possessed an original mind. Not only was he the first to force himself out of the opening door of the submarine, but he carried out a large American flag, which he planted in the ground among the brown weeds between the boulders, while with sedate and ceremonious gestures, he proclaimed, "In the name of the United States of America, I take possession of this land!"

But the rest of us gave no heed to his words. We were taking deep, refreshing breaths of the pure, clean air, which came to us almost like a mercy from heaven after the suffocating atmosphere of the submarine. And before we had had half the needed time to revive our starving lungs, an astounding phenomenon, as unexpected as the very discovery of this spectral region, was to drive Stranahan from our thoughts at the same time that it flooded our minds with terror. For the golden lights above suddenly flickered, gave out a fugitive spark or two, and with meteor swiftness went out. We found ourselves mantled in a starless and impenetrable blackness, more mysterious and dreadful than the loneliest watery abysses from which we had just escaped.

CHAPTER III

On Unknown Shores

NO sooner was the darkness complete than it seemed to be populated with all manner of weird and terrible things. The disappearance of the light seemed to be the signal for the approach of a host of evil monsters. A chorus of hoarse, unearthly voices, loud as the bellowing of a bull, resounded about us in a deep, continuous bass; and throaty gruntings and savage snorts and howlings echoed and droned as though they issued from ten thousand pairs of giant lungs. Dazed with horror, we stared into the unbroken gloom like doomed men; I had visions of colossal eyes smoldering from the blackness, and jaws that struck and tore, and gnashing teeth that rent and shattered.

But it was not a moment before our dumbfounded inaction was over. Pellmell we flung ourselves toward the submarine, almost failing to find it in the darkness, and tumbling tumultuously over one another in our haste to crowd through the narrow door. Several of the men were shoved accidentally into the water, and Stranahan came in dripping from an unexpected swim; while the Captain walked with a slight limp, newly acquired.

At length, however, we were all safely within the ship, and the doors were barred against the unknown peril. Several of the men, still trembling with terror, were eager to get under way directly; but this idea the Captain emphatically vetoed, declaring that the X-111 was no longer seaworthy. All that we could do now was to try to locate the danger with our searchlights; and accordingly, we wasted no time before switching on our powerful lanterns and revolving them in slow circles that illumined by turns every inch of the boulder-strewn, weedy plain. All in vain. Although the unearthly chorus could be heard even through the closed doors and showed no sign of diminishing, our searchlights revealed nothing that we had not already seen.

For some time we watched and waited—but nothing happened. And at length, turning to us all with a smile, the Captain advised, "Well, boys, we've all had a pretty hard time of it. Suppose we just forget about that racket out there and try to take a little rest."

We were all glad enough to follow the Captain's suggestion. Several of the men were commissioned to take turns standing watch; and the rest of us were not long in seeking much needed sleep. Within a few minutes, the deep and regular breathing from the nearby bunks informed me that my companions had temporarily forgotten the day's adventures.

For my own part, exhausted as I was, I could not so readily find relief. The events not only of the past few hours, but of many months, came trooping before my mind in continuous blurred procession; I was obsessed by my own imaginings, and from a dim-half-consciousness, I would awaken time after time to a vivid re-experiencing of some almost forgotten episode. And, strangely enough, my reveries were concerned mainly with a single phase of my life—the phase I was now living. My youth and early manhood might almost not have existed, for all that I remembered of them now; but I did sharply recall how, at the outbreak of war more than a year ago, I had decided abruptly upon the action that had plunged me into my present plight. Resigning my position at Northeastern University, where I had been serving as instructor in Classic Greek, I had enlisted in the navy, and had promptly been sent to an officers' training school, from which I had emerged as Ensign. Friends had commended me upon my patriotism, yet it was not patriotism, but rather the greed for adventure, that had motivated my decision; and now, as I looked back, it seemed ironic to me that my previous uneventful days had been so much more pleasant than any of my adventures. There was,

however, one factor which had served to make those days enjoyable, a factor without which even the most active life would be barren indeed—and that factor was one which could have no place in wartime. Frequently, as I tossed and struggled fitfully on my narrow bunk, there flashed before me out of the darkness the blue eyes and laughing face of one whom I could scarcely recall without a pang; and I lived again with Alma Huntley those sparkling days among the Vermont hills, when she was to me all that life was, and I won her promise of devotion among the scented pines and to the music of rippling waters . . . That day was long past, yet how actually it came back to mind! And how acutely memory brought back a later day, when her cheeks were moist and I held her in a minute-long embrace, and mutual vows and soft murmurings were exchanged, and then there came the sharpness of "Farewell!" and she was gone, lost amid a blur of faces, and I marched sedately on while the world was blotted out in loneliness and grief . . . Oh, why had I left her, plunging thus among these unknown horrors? . . . Fervently, as I lay there listening to the uncanny bellowings from the ghostly world without, I longed to reach out my arms to her, to hold her warmly, to speak to her, and to hear her speak, if only one loved word. . . .

But even the most intense yearning may be blotted out by sleep. And at last, after hours, I lost my memories in unconsciousness—an intermittent unconsciousness, broken by disturbed dreams and vague images of death and disaster. . . .

I OPENED my eyes to find a bright, golden light pouring in through the unshuttered windows. Surprised, I leapt to my feet, and discovered that the great mysterious golden orbs were shining as before from far above, the boulder-strewn plain glimmered as clearly as at first, the massive columns were still fairy-like in their tints of pale pink and blue, while the hideous bestial noises had unaccountably ceased.

Hastily I dressed and rejoined my companions. I found them gathered about in a little circle, earnestly talking; and they welcomed me gladly into their discussion, the subject of which I at once surmised. For what but our mysterious plight could now occupy our minds and tongues? None of us, as yet, had more than the faintest inkling of where we were or what had befallen us. That we were in some sort of cavern beneath the sea was the belief of the Captain and several of the men, but this region seemed so oddly unlike a cavern that the explanation was not generally accepted; and the more superstitious were inclined to hold that we had been bewitched into some sort of supernatural, goblin realm. For my own part, I could hardly understand how we could be in a submarine cavern without being completely flooded; and much less could I understand how we could be in any known land above seas.

Obviously, the only likely source of information was through exploration. And since it was not possible to conduct any explorations with the aid of the disabled X-111, the Captain took the only other available course—which was to order some of the men to set forth into the Unknown on foot, determine the lay of the land and return as soon as possible with whatever tidings they might gather.

Stangale and Howlett, being the most experienced veterans, were selected to make the initial attempt. In a few minutes, they set off cheerfully together, equipped with firearms and a day's supply of food and drink, with instructions to return within twenty-four hours at the latest.

Twelve or fifteen hours went by while we waited impatiently; the great golden orbs flashed out as mysteriously as before, and for eight or ten hours we slept; then, upon awakening, we found the lights still shining as brightly as ever, and noted that it was time for the return of our two scouts. We watched in vain for their arrival. Not a moving thing greeted us from the unchanging, bouldery plain; hours went by; excited speculation gave way to more excited speculation, and wild rumor to still wilder rumor; the suspense became tantalizing, and yet there was nothing to do but wait. Had the men lost their way? or had they met with some disastrous adventure? or had the savage inhabitants of these wild realms seized and imprisoned them? To these questions there was no answer, though many were the conjectures. When the darkness had fallen upon us once again, and once again we had slept and awakened to find the golden light restored, we knew that it was time to set out in search of the missing ones.

This time the Captain called for volunteers to invade the Unknown, which, as he warned us, might be dangerous beyond all expectations; and after half the crew had offered themselves for the adventure, his choice fell upon Ripley and Stranahan.

It was with genuine regret that I watched these two gallant seamen set forth amid the reeds by the river's brink, to disappear at length among the boulders and behind the great stone columns. Somehow, as I lost sight of them, I had a sense that we might not see them again so soon. I was sad as though with a forewarning of disaster; and, as I reflected upon the pitfalls and dangers they might have to face, I experienced more than one twinge of vicarious fear.

Worst of all, my misgivings seemed to be justified by time. Twelve hours passed, and the explorers had not returned; twenty-four hours, and there was still no word from them, though they had been given explicit orders to be back. With grim, set eyes, the Captain stood alone by the river bank, gazing sternly into that wilderness which had already engulfed four of his men; and the rest of the crew stood chattering fearfully among themselves, declaring that this land was "haunted," "spooky," and "thick with devils."

It was curious to note how, in these weird, unknown domains, outworn superstitions were being reborn; how ready the men were to believe in goblins, dragons, sea serpents, werewolves and all manner of fantastic monsters. Even the more enlightened of us seemed about to forget all that civilization had taught us; and, in the failure of all that we had been accustomed to cling to, we were clutching at a savage, terrorizing faith in incredible and ghostly things.

By the time that Stranahan and Ripley had been absent forty-eight hours, the crew was in a state of impatience verging upon madness. The fluttering of a feather would have sent them scampering like frightened horses; the buzzing of a bee might have been the signal for spasms of dread. On one occasion, indeed, the chirping of some cricket-like insect did put half a dozen of the men into a panic; and on another occasion three or four of them turned pale merely upon hearing the swishing and flapping of a small fish in the river.

It was when the excitement was nearing its highest that the Captain called once more for volunteers to search for the missing men. But so deep-rooted and paralyzing was the general alarm that only two of us offered our names—young Phil Rawson and myself. I do not know what strange wave of courage had suddenly emboldened this timorous recruit while less callow men held back. For my own part, I must admit

that I volunteered from the mere desire to escape from ennui and the half-frenzied rabble of my comrades. But, whatever our motives, we were promptly to be launched into adventures that were not only to test our hardihood, but to prove interesting beyond anything we could have imagined.

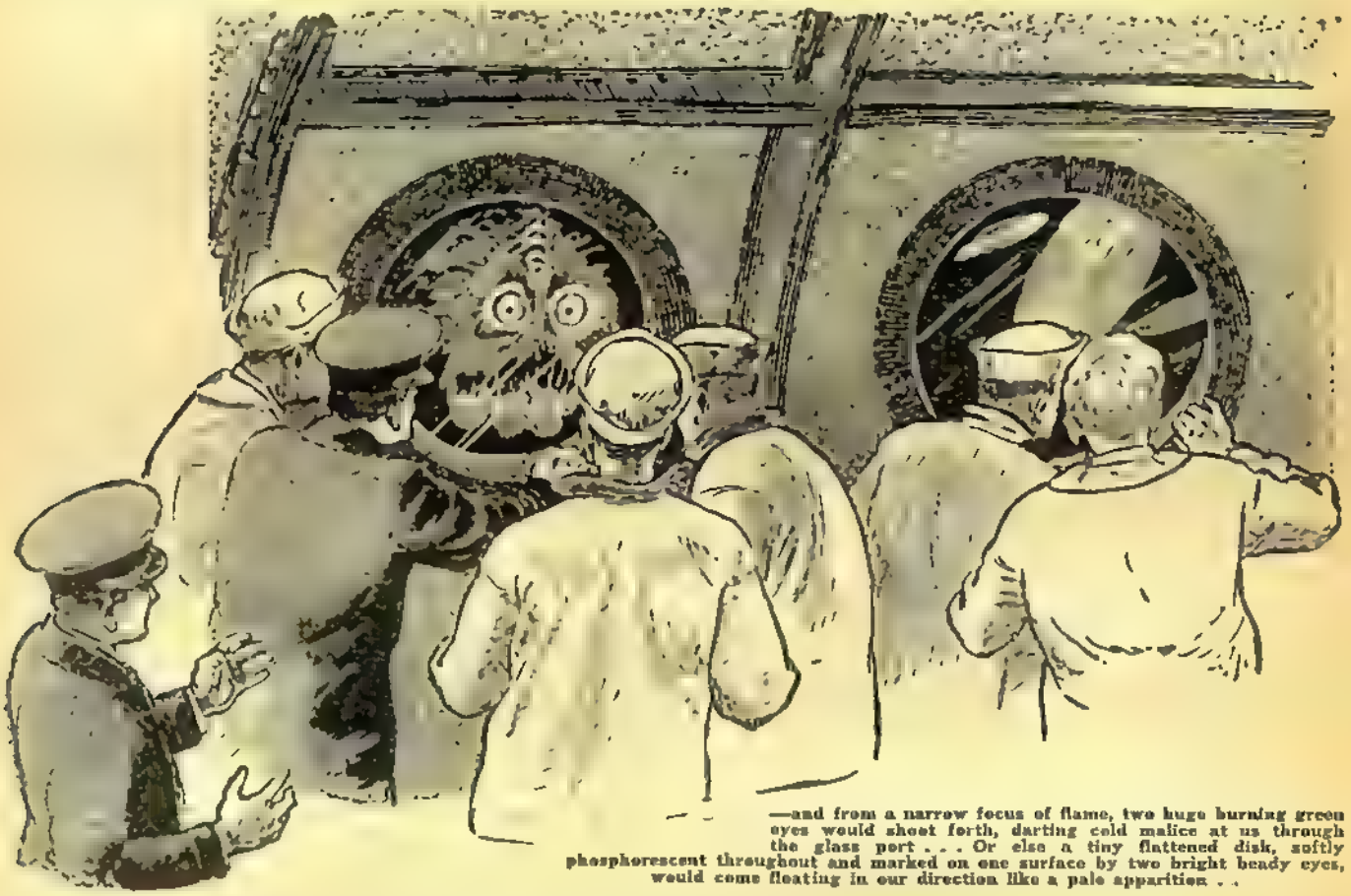
CHAPTER IV

A Tour of Exploration

RAWSON and I had been gone not half an hour when the aspect of the country began suddenly to change. It was as though we had passed some indistinguishable boundary, for the boulders were rapidly becoming less numerous, and at length disappeared entirely, while at the same time the odd, mossy vegetation became astonishingly rich and profuse. Or, to be precise, it gave place to a different vegetation entirely, an unearthly vegetation, almost too strange for belief. At the risk of being accused of fabrication, I must describe those incredible plants: the creepers with long leaves of lace-like brown, which twined in dainty wreaths and veils about the olive-green boles of limbless trees, the bushes, shaped like starfishes, and of the hue of dried grass, with diaphanous flowers that a breath might have blown away; the cinnamon-brown reeds that rose to double a man's height, ending in a profusion of cucumber-shaped fruits; the peculiar, abundant growth that looked at a distance like a great earthen jar, but proved upon closer examination to be the hollow container of a species of milk-white down that grew in long and silken strands like untended hair.

So dense was the foliage that we would not have been able to force our way through it, and would not have dared to make the attempt, had it not been for a sharply cut path which wound in leisurely curves and undulations close to the river's brink. It was not like one of those paths which nature occasionally plans, or which are due to the tracks of wild beasts, for it had a regularity of design and an evenness of width that proved it to be unmistakably the work of man. Yet what man could have penetrated before us into these uncanny sunless depths? At the mere thought that others might have preceded us we involuntarily shuddered; we were half convinced that we were intruders into a tomb closed ages ago. But despite this conviction, we kept a constant, half-terrified outlook for sign of human presence.

It was not long before our vigilance was rewarded. Abruptly the path before us widened, until it was of the size of a broad highway; and above the dense masses of vegetation, we beheld in astonishment the looming marble pillars of a Grecian colonnade. Toward this the road led in long and graceful curves; and it was but a few minutes before we found ourselves at the entrance of a covered walk or "stoa" that brought back to me vivid memories of "the glory that was Greece." On both sides of us the palely-tinted Ionic columns rose to a majestic height, daintily ornamented at the base with the acanthus design, and curving in symmetrical proportions that brought to mind the perfection of the Parthenon; while the marble floor on which we walked and the marble ceiling above us were frescoed with figures that seemed drawn bodily from the romance of the ancient world. They were not wholly Greek. I knew these pictures of sportive mermaids and lightning-hurling gods and dragon-slaying heroes and misty caves of twilight and the throbbing lyre; but there was something suggestively Greek about them all; and steeped as I was in the lore of ancient Hellas, I had the singular feeling that the hand of time had been turned backward two thousand years or more.



—and from a narrow focus of flame, two huge burning green eyes would shoot forth, darting cold malice at us through the glass port . . . Or else a tiny flattened disk, softly phosphorescent throughout and marked on one surface by two bright beady eyes, would come floating in our direction like a pale apparition . .

This feeling was accentuated when, having followed the covered walk for a distance of several hundred yards, I observed that it led to a magnificent, many-columned edifice which could pass for nothing if not for a temple of the ancient gods. It was a structure of solid marble, white marble artistically varied with veilings of black; its pillars were massive as the trunks of the giant redwoods I had seen in the California forests years before, and like those redwoods, produced an effect of solemnity and awe; but all was so perfectly designed and proportioned that, while the building occupied an area perhaps as large as the average city block, it gave an effect less of magnitude than of artistic completeness and beauty. No living thing was visible about the precincts of this amazing temple, nor would I have expected any living thing in what I had come subconsciously to regard as a realm of the dead; but I was overawed at thought of this abandoned loveliness, and paused at some distance to regard it reflectively, mentally asking whether it was some still undiscovered survival from classical times or whether I was but seeing a vision.

A suppressed exclamation from young Rawson brought me back to reality—or, at least, to the unbelievable thing that passed for reality. In the very center of the swift-rolling river, the banks of which paralleled the colonnade at a distance of a dozen paces, I observed a low-lying, gliding form, gracefully elevated at both extremes, which at the first terrified glimpse I took to be some fabulous monster, but which I soon recognized as some sort of boat or canoe. Before I had had time for a half-composed glance at it, it had gone speeding out of view; but in its fast-moving frame, I thought I could distinguish half a dozen dusky bobbing shapes, and half a dozen pairs of oars that reached out rhythmically, and noiselessly clove the dark waters. Later, when I had had time for reflection, I was to recognize this strange craft as akin to the shadowy apparition, the unknown sea monster which had so terrified us in the submarine; but at present I was overwhelmed by the knowledge that this weird place was actually peopled, peopled by living men whom at any moment we might meet face to face!

WE had scarcely recovered from this surprise when an even greater surprise flashed upon us. Out of the windows of the temple, which we had believed long closed to human sound, a strange, thin music began to float, serenely beautiful and of elfin remoteness and charm. . . . And while, entranced, we listened to those magical strains, there came the fluttering of a butterfly gown, and from the temple doors issued a shimmering, dancing form, followed by a score of other dancing, shimmering forms—scarcely human, we believed, so ethereal did they seem in the flashing and waving of arms, the swift rhythm of feet, and the play and interplay of pale blue and gold and pink and lavender and white from their flowing and multi-colored robes. A singular iridescence seemed to overspread them, almost a halo such as may envisage a goddess; and, gaping and enthralled, we gazed on them as men might gaze on Venus were she to return to earth. Now down the long colonnade they started, tripping toward us with birdlike gestures and the airy unreality of perfect time and movement; and, fearful to disturb the vision by our gross presence, we hid ourselves behind the great stone columns, peeping out furtively as though they might vanish bubble-like at our gaze. But, apparently absorbed in their dance, they continued gracefully toward us, not glancing to right or to left, and catching no hint of our intrusion—until, as the procession drew more near and the charm of the music more compelling, I peered out too incautiously from behind my marble bulwark, and found myself staring full into the face of the most ravishingly beautiful woman I had ever beheld. There was a quality about her face that seemed to mark it as not of the earth, the Madonnas of old paintings have something of that look; and the most perfect womanly bust that sculptor has ever conceived; but there was also a vividness and an animation that no mere painting or statue has ever shared, together with an air of such innocence, such candor and kindliness of soul that, had I been a believer in angels, I might have gone down straightway upon my knees.

But all this I beheld in the space between two heart-beats. Even as the vision greeted me it vanished; the beautiful clear eyes were distended with terror upon their first contact with mine; there came a scream of fright, followed by a chorus of screams; then a scurrying of fast-retreating feet, and the bright, fairy-like shapes had vanished; and the empty river flowed silently past the empty colonnade and temple.

CHAPTER V

The Mysterious City

THE next few hours showed us a continuous amazing panorama. The marble temple proved to be but one of a series connected by long and graceful colonnades; and in the central structures, the Ionic and Doric architecture were curiously mingled with a type that seemed scarcely Grecian at all, since it admitted of all variety of arches and curves unknown to the builders of classical Hellas. Most remarkable of all, perhaps, were the gorgeously ornamented vases —some of them six or eight feet in height—which were of a style akin to those excavated from the ruins of old Ilium. But what caught my eye even more strikingly were the statues that occasionally appeared in niches along the marble galleries or in alcoves of the temples—statues that would surely not have been unworthy of a Praxiteles, since even Praxiteles could not have surpassed the symmetry of form and the unstrained reality of pose and expression with which these unknown artists had depicted their wrestling heroes and dancing fauns and stern-browed old men and queenly maidens and gracious youths. For one who had been nurtured on modern art, these busts and marbles were as old paintings would be to him who had known only sketches in black and white; there was none of that snowy coldness or bronze severity of hue which are so common in sculpture today, but all of the statues had been skilfully tinted with the complexion of life, and such was the verisimilitude, that several times I started in surprise on beholding what I took to be a living man but which proved to be only an image of stone. I was interested, moreover, to note that none of the sculptured features had that peculiar hardness and selfish keenness so common among the men I had known, but that all seemed suffused with a clear and tranquil spirituality; and every lyric impulse within me was awakened when I observed on many of the faces of the women that same unearthly Madonna look which had graced the butterfly-gowned dancing maiden.

But, of course, Rawson and I did not allow our pleasure in the statuary to keep our minds from more vital subjects. Above all, we maintained a constant lookout for the inhabitants of these queer regions, for we could no longer suppress the suspicion that unseen furtive eyes were peeping out at us from behind every pillar and wall. For my own part, I had more

than one qualm that I did not care to admit, and secretly wished myself back on the X-111; and as for Rawson—I found that youth afflicted with far too much imagination for an adventurer, and repeatedly begged him to keep his fantastic fears to himself.

But there was no repressing the excitable young Rawson. When he was not drawing pictures of the serpents and wild beasts that probably infested the thickets beside the temples, he would be diverting me with the most grewsome ghost stories I had ever heard; and he went so far as to suggest that the dancing girls had been only airy apparitions, while the brilliant golden lights above us had no more reality than a will-o'-the-wisp. Evidently he had been too much nurtured on fiction of the blood-and-terror variety, for only a devotee of the most hectic adventure tales could have imagined, as he did, that our pathway was beset with robbers' lairs, pirates' dens, scorpions and crocodiles, head-hunting cannibals, siren women luring us to destruction, and murderous desperadoes of a thousand ilks and guilds.

Fortunately for my peace of mind, I heard not half of Rawson's ravings, for my interest in the wayside architecture served as a distraction. For two or three hours I was occupied with inspecting the gracefully connecting galleries of five or six temples; and, having passed the last of the group, I was absorbed in my observations of a long, marble colonnade which extended apparently for miles in a straight line amid the gray and brown fantastic vegetation.

And now it was that I made the most startling discovery of the day. At intervals along the floor of the colonnade, which was of a red and yellow mosaic of baked and hardened clay, appeared deeply-graven inscriptions which I paused eagerly to survey. At first I thought that they were in no known language, but it was not long before I had detected a certain resemblance between the characters and those of the ancient Greek. Profiting from my collegiate study of that tongue, I puzzled over the words while Rawson stood by impatiently urging me to be off; and one by one I succeeded in identifying the letters with those of the Greek alphabet! Not every one of the characters, it is true, could be recognized with assurance, but enough of them were unmistakably Greek to give me a clue to the whole; and at length I found myself making a translation that might solve the entire mystery of this extraordinary land.

BUT the process was a slow and plodding one, and I did not make the progress I had expected. Even though the letters were clear enough, the meaning of the words was not. Evidently this was not the Greek of Plato or Thucidydes, in which I had been thoroughly schooled; but rather it was a language that was to classical Greek what Chaucer is to modern English. Still, I was not completely discouraged, for I did manage to make out an occasional word, though not at first enough to give meaning to any passage. All in all, considering the limited time at my disposal, my efforts seemed futile; and I was about to yield to Rawson's importunities and give up this diverting study for further exploration, when suddenly I made a successful discovery. I must have come upon a passage simpler than the rest, for unexpectedly half a sentence flashed upon me with clear-cut meaning at once so striking and so enigmatical that I stopped short with a little cry of surprise.

"Placed here in the year Three Thousand of the Submergence," ran the words, which occurred in large lettering at the base of a statue of a strong man trampling down the ruins of what looked like a steel building. "Placed here . . ." at this point were several words that I could not make out—"in celebration of the Good Destruction."

"In celebration of the Good Destruction!" I repeated, after translating the words aloud. "Sounds as if written by a madman!"

"Maybe you didn't read it right," commented Rawson.

This suggestion, of course, I ignored. "Wonder what the Submergence can mean," I continued, meditatively. "That doesn't seem to make sense, either."

"No, it doesn't," Rawson admitted, with a thoughtful drawl. "Everything down here seems sort of topsy-turvy. Suppose we go on and see what else we can find out."

I nodded a hesitating assent, and we proceeded on our way in silence. But, though we did not speak, our thoughts were active indeed, for more than ever I was convinced that somehow, unaccountably, we were amid the remains of a Grecian or pre-Grecian countryside. Had Socrates or the radiant Phobus himself stepped out of the grave to greet me, I would not have been surprised; and I more than half expected to catch a glimpse of Athena's robe from behind the dark shrubbery, or to see the winged feet of Hermes or hear the clear notes of Pan.

But neither Pan nor Hermes nor any of their famed kindred presented themselves upon the scene. And after walking at a good pace for more than an hour along the marble colonnade, I forgot those interesting individuals in contemplation of a scene that left me gaping in greater astonishment than if I had invaded a council of the high Olympian gods. For some minutes a series of huge templed domes and columns, dimly visible through rifts in the vegetation, had attracted my attention and aroused Rawson's misgivings; but neither of us had had any intimation of the sight that was to greet us when at length we came to the end of the colonnade.

Suddenly we saw a clay road sloping down sharply beneath us, and found ourselves gazing out over a valley more dazzling than we had ever before known or imagined. Through its center flowed the great river, with gentle loops and twinings; above us, as before, reached the dark-green sky illumined with the golden suns; and an innumerable multitude of palely tinted columns, like the tree trunks of some colossal forest, shot upward to that sky as though to support it. But what were truly remarkable were the buildings that adorned the plain. On both sides of the river they stretched, far to the distance and out of sight, palaces of white marble and of black marble, of jade and of alabaster, some with an elegant symmetry of Greek columns, some with a solidity of masonry that seemed half Egyptian, some with an almost Oriental profusion of spires and turrets, of porticoes and balconies and arches and domes. But all alike were reared in perfect taste, and with perfect regard to the style of their neighbors; all alike faced on wide avenues, flowery lanes or lawny and statue-dotted parks; all appeared but parts of a single design which, when seen from above, was like some consummate tapestry patterned by a master artist.

As Rawson and I stood staring at this matchless scene, I suddenly recalled the steeples and towers of that city we had seen beneath us in the submarine. A strange similarity in the outlines of the buildings impressed itself upon me—then in a flash it came to me that the two cities were one and the same! And at that instant I shuddered, amazed and horrified at the abrupt solution of the mystery . . . It was as the Captain had suggested; we were indeed beneath the

ocean, thousands of feet beneath the ocean, in some cavern inexplicably spared from the waters and haunted by the ghosts and relics of some ancient and vanished race!

CHAPTER VI

The Temple of the Stars

FAR from echoing the agitation I felt, Rawson seemed actually pleased at the turn of events. It piqued his imagination to think that we should be so far beneath the sea; and he conjured up all manner of alluring possibilities that testified more to his youth than to his common sense. He suggested that we were the discoverers of a great and magnificent empire which we should explore, conquer and then annex to the United States; and he formed his plans regardless of the probability that we should never see the United States again, and almost as though there were regular transportation facilities to the upper world. The sheer scientific difficulties—the apparent impossibility that a cavern free from water could exist beneath the ocean, the even more striking impossibility that human beings could inhabit such a cavern—seemed to make little impression upon the illogical mind of Rawson; and he was convinced that only by the rarest good fortune had we been entombed in these fantastic and dream-like depths.

So intense was his enthusiasm, that he urged me to descend at once with him to the many-templed city. But I did not willingly accede; I pointed out that it would be wiser to hasten back to the submarine, inform Captain Gavison of what we had seen, and return here—if we returned at all—in greater numbers than at present. Besides, as I reminded Rawson, the Captain had ordered us back within twenty-four hours; and, if we dallied, some mischance might delay us until too late.

Had Rawson but had a dim prevision of the black hours ahead, he would certainly have accepted my suggestions. But, perversely enough, he seemed to be almost without his usual fears just when those fears might have proved most useful. And since of course I could not allow myself to be outdone in bravery by a mere boy, I had to signify a grudging assent to his proposal. I must confess, however, that my motives were not unmixed, for pictures of the iridescent dancing girl kept flitting before my mind and would give me no peace; and I may have had hopes (I will not say that I did) of meeting her again in this city of fountains and palaces.

But not a living creature could be seen stirring in the avenues of that strange town as Rawson and I began our slow descent. Once or twice we thought we saw the glimmer of a light or the flash of some moving thing in the far distance, but we could not be sure; and the silence and the immobility gave the general effect of a city of the dead. There was something ghostly about that calm, still atmosphere, something that might have made me turn back in alarm had it not been for the presence of Rawson; but there was also something soothingly peaceful, a charmed quiet that brought to mind the fairy tales I had heard in childhood, and in particular that enchanted palace where the Sleeping Beauty had slumbered for a hundred years. Here, I thought, one might dream away a hundred years or a thousand, and never know that time had passed at all; here, conceivably, the ancient world might lapse into the modern, and the modern into the far future without apparent change.

My reveries were interrupted by our arrival at the gates of the city. We passed beneath a high arch almost Roman in style, with marble base and facade ornamented with strange blue sea-shells; then, proceeding along a winding cement walk inlaid with mother-of-pearl, we approached the most stately palace of all. In architecture, it was totally dissimilar to anything we had ever before observed: although perhaps five hundred feet in length, it was as much like a great statue as like a building; it had none of those features common in edifices for the shelter of man and his works, but seemed to have been erected exclusively as a piece of art. Its form was that of a woman, a woman reclining at full length, her breast to the ground, her head slightly elevated, propped meditatively upon her palm; and the structure as a whole had been planned with such subtlety and skill, with such consummate attention to every detail of the woman's position, form and garments and to the beatific and yet lifelike expression of the face, that Rawson and I could only pause in bewildered silence and stare and stare as though this work had been created through no human agency but by some superhuman master hand.

In that first spellbound moment, it did not occur to us that there might be an entrance to the palace. But at length, where a lock of the woman's dark, sculptured hair fell across her breast, we noted a little doorway so skilfully concealed that it had originally escaped our attention. Since the gate swung wide upon the hinges, curiosity, of course, prompted us to glance within—and with results that proved but a further spur to curiosity. All that we could see was a pale, golden glitter against a background of black; but imagination supplied that which our physical sight could not reveal, and we had visions of gorgeous halls and corridors which we longed to inspect.

HAD our courage been sufficient, we would have entered at once. The idea, in fact, came to both of us simultaneously, but at first neither of us could summon up the requisite boldness. There seemed to be something mysteriously, almost irresistibly, attractive about that twinkling darkness, something that held us fascinated and forbade us to leave; and for several minutes we stood hesitating, and straining our eyes, yet making no motion to invade the unknown.

Then, when the suspense had become so protracted as to be ridiculous, Rawson surprised me by exclaiming, suddenly, "I'm not afraid!" And at the same time he slapped his sides energetically as though to prove to himself that he had no fears. "I'm going right in!" he announced, with what I thought to be unnecessary loudness. And, feeling for his revolver with a hand that trembled perceptibly, Rawson strode resolutely into the building.

There was nothing for me to do but follow. But, somehow, I could not help wishing that my friend had not been so rash; and, somehow, I foresaw that we might not be able to leave this strange edifice so easily as we had entered.

But, once within, we forgot our misgivings in contemplation of the magnificent scene around us. I had been in luxurious galleries before; I had seen the most ornate salons of the Old World, and the most lavishly bedecked of mosques and cathedrals; but never had I viewed or imagined so utterly sublime a hall. Here was a new art of the interior decorator, an art that seemed wholly without parallel in human experience; I was scarcely conscious that I was indoors, but rather felt myself to be in the open, in the open at night, under the wide and glittering heavens, with the light of innumerable stars above me,

and the dim cloudy arch of the Milky Way. How the artist had produced his effect was more than I could say, but somehow, in his limited space, he had given the impression of vastness and distance, of the mystery and infinite silence of the starlight; and as I stood there entranced, I could almost imagine that I was back again on earth, gazing out into the night-skies as I had gazed so often from the Vermont hills with Alma Huntley. . . . And yet, perfectly patterned as they were, these skies were not the skies I had known. As I stood there watching, I became aware that certain of the constellations were slightly, almost indistinguishably out of position, the stars not quite in their proper relations to one another—and why this was, I could not attempt to say. But more striking was another alteration that had been wrought deliberately and with subtle artistry: above the stars, and about the thin girdle of the Milky Way, were filmy formations of light, which—perhaps it was only my imagination—gradually resolved themselves into tenuous human figures. One, an exquisitely graceful woman, seemed to be playing upon some lyre-like instrument; another, a youth with head uplifted as though in enraptured contemplation, impressed me as the spirit of all human aspiration; and still others, no less consummately outlined, appeared to represent the hopes and loves and immortal yearnings of man.

But while I remained rooted there in ecstatic contemplation, filled with wonder at the paradox of beholding the stars thousands of feet beneath the sea, there occurred one of those changes by which occasionally a beautiful dream becomes distorted into a nightmare. Imagine the consternation of one who, while gazing at the cloudless night-skies, finds blackness suddenly sweeping all about him—a blackness that has quenched the stars as a storm might quench a candle flame. Such consternation was ours, and even greater horror, for without so much as a flicker of warning, the lights of the seeming heavens flashed out, and darkness stretched above us and all about us, a darkness so all-consuming that not even a shadow remained. With half-suppressed cries of terror, Rawson and I turned to one another, each totally invisible in the blank night; and before we had had time for coherent speech, there came a rattling and a slamming from behind us, and we knew that the one possible exit had been closed and that we were prisoners in this unknown place.

CHAPTER VII

Trapped

FOR a moment we were like rats newly trapped. All trace of reason left us in our sudden furious terror; we began to scurry blindly to and fro, to and fro in the darkness, panic-stricken in our frenzy to escape. Where we were dashing we did not know, nor whether we might not be rushing into greater peril still; we collided more than once with the unseen walls, stumbled over invisible objects on the floor, and went fumbling about in long loops and circles—but all to no avail. The marvel is not that we accomplished nothing, but that we did not break our necks, for so utterly fear-maddened were we that it was minutes before we had any thought of ceasing our mad perambulations and considering our predicament calmly and rationally.

If I can judge aright from my confused memories of those terrible moments, it was the sound of a heavy body falling that shocked me back to my senses. The fall, which was thudding and resonant, was accompanied by a suppressed oath, which seemed to issue from far to my rear, but which none the less sounded familiar.

"Rawson!" I cried, stopping short, and forgetting caution in my alarm. "Are you hurt?"

"No, I'm not hurt," came the drawled reply, as though from a tremendous distance. And then, after a groan, "No, I'm all right."

"Where are you?" I yelled back. "How can I get to you?"

Rawson shouted directions, and I went groping toward him. The process was by no means easy, for I was guided wholly by the senses of touch and hearing, and more than once I came into painful contact with some unforeseen obstacle. But after some minutes I found myself grasping a solid, yielding mass which I recognized as the arm of my friend.

Rawson was as glad as I of our reunion. Somehow, now that we were together again, we both felt much stronger and the unknown foe seemed less redoubtable. Yet that foe seemed terrible enough as we sat there on the floor conversing in whispers. Although we had regained some slight composure, the falling of a pin might have sent us off into convulsions; and our imaginations were busy painting grotesque and shadowy horrors.

"What can it mean?" murmured Rawson, as he sat with his hand upon my knee, as though to reassure himself by the mere physical fact of my presence. "What do you think it can mean?"

I declined to venture any direct reply, although suggestions sufficiently dreadful were piling up in my brain.

"Remember how Stranahan and the others were lost," continued Rawson, solemnly, as if the explanation of their disappearance were now self-evident.

"I don't see what that has to do with us," I argued. And then, with a forced attempt at bravado, "Don't worry, Rawson. Chances are everything will turn out all right."

"I hope so," conceded Rawson, in a tone indicating that he rather wished things would turn out badly. And, by way of fanning my courage, he entertained me with the most ghastly stories he could imagine—stories of men trapped in coal mines, men lost in labyrinthine caves, men entombed in deep pits or immured in lightless dungeons. To all these tales I listened with growing uneasiness, meanwhile racking my mind to remember a parallel to our own predicament. But I could think of nothing that even remotely resembled it; and, having nothing to say, I answered Rawson only in monosyllables.

Perhaps owing to the terseness of my replies—or perhaps because of the terror of our plight—his loquacious mood soon deserted him. It was not long before we had lapsed into silence; and it was minutes before either of us spoke again. Meantime the darkness was so intense, the silence so complete and the stillness so absolute that I was persecuted with all manner of fantastic fears. What unknown horrors were brewing in these serene depths? What grotesque or malevolent or even murderous things? In my anxiety, I peopled the gloom with monstrous shapes of a thousand varieties, with slimy, crawling serpents, with lithe, crouching panthers, with great apes, whose brawny arms could strangle a man, and—worst of all—with slinking, barbarous humans that crept up slyly to seize and tab one in the dark.

By degrees my imaginings were becoming so grewsome that I could no longer endure them. And, merely to find relief from myself, I whispered, "Come, Rawson, it's senseless to sit here doing nothing. Maybe we can find some exit, if only we look care-

fully enough. What do you say? Shall we try anyhow?"

"I say it's a good idea," assented Rawson, rising cautiously to his feet.

Without a word I followed his example, and for the next half hour we groped laboriously along the walls, which we found to be of an ice-cold stone, as smooth as polished marble, absolutely perpendicular and apparently without a flaw or break. Our movements were slow and even agonizing, for the blackness was still unbroken, and in that hushed, mysterious place, the slightest sound would send sharp tremors running down our spines. Even the grating of our own shoes against the floor seemed to take on a sinister, uncanny meaning; the whispered tones of our own voices seemed unhallowed and ghostly; while the occasional rapping of our fists against the walls or our clattering contact with some unseen obstacle sent the echoes ringing and reverberating with unearthly, hollow notes until our overwrought nerves quivered at the rustling of our clothing or at the sound of our own breath.

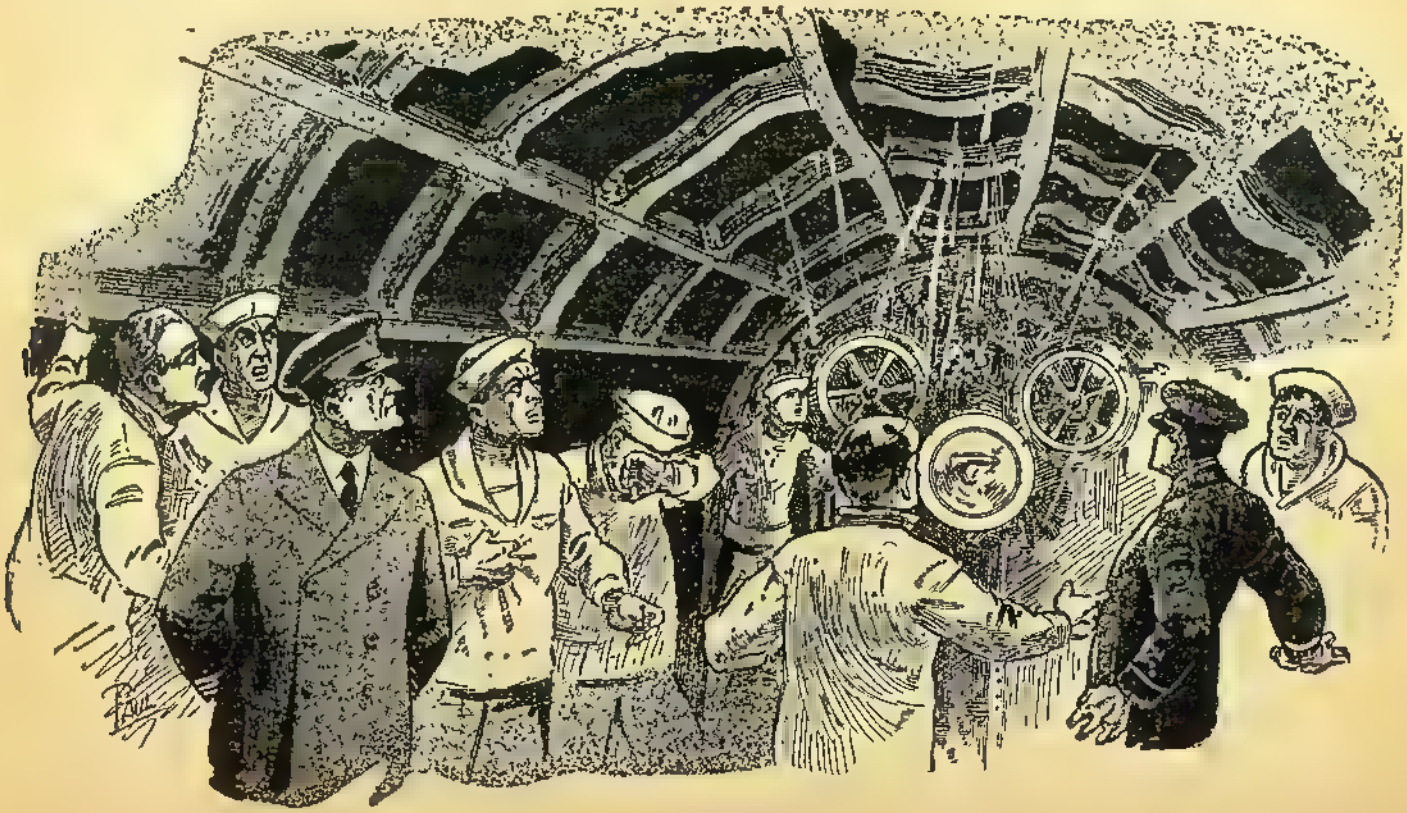
Possibly two or three times we encircled that great hall—in the darkness it was impossible to tell where our starting place had been—but we could find no indication of any passageway or door. And at length, exhausted by the strain, we crouched on the floor near the wall and waited miserably for something to happen. Almost anything that could have happened—no matter how grim and terrible—would have been a relief; but the quiet was undisturbed, while we sat tense and alert, with fast-throbbing hearts, and eyes that searched and searched the gloom in vain. Neither of us spoke now; and the garrulous Rawson seemed wrapped up in his own dismal thoughts. How long a period passed thus I cannot say; my watch may have recorded whole hours, but certainly my thoughts recorded whole years, for I have lived years that knew less of suspense, uneasiness and dread.

But at last, after endless waiting, relief came with disconcerting suddenness. As though by the turning of an electric switch, a dazzlingly brilliant light flashed into view above us—a light that contrasted strangely with the stars of some hours before, and that shone blindingly in a pale blue field like the sun in the cloudless heavens. Then, while we stood shading our eyes from the glaring illumination, we observed just opposite us, the gate through which we had doubtless entered. And with surprise we noted that it moved slowly upon its hinges; that slowly and as if by magic it made clear the way of escape!

"The place is enchanted!" muttered Rawson, in dazed fascination. "Come, let's get out of here!"

But when, overjoyed at our rescue, we started toward the gate, an unexpected obstacle intruded. Half a dozen of the queerest beings we had ever seen came crowding into our path—tall, butterfly-like creatures with faces almost waxen pale and long capes and robes of pink and blue and lavender and yellow pastel tints. All had long, flowing light red or golden hair which reached at least to the shoulders; one, apparently the oldest, wore an ample beard, but the majority were smooth shaven; none had headgear of any type, and all were shod with sandals covered with green moss, above which for several inches the unclothed legs were visible. From the blank, amazed stares with which they greeted us, it was evident that our appearance was as much a surprise to them as theirs was to us. But from a certain sternness and resolution which invested their faces following the first speechless astonishment, we concluded that they had probably seen others of our kind, and were not disposed to treat us leniently.

We noted also that, though quivering with dread, they kept the exit firmly blocked. And in the long, staring silence that ensued, we felt in dismay that at last we had met the masters of this strange land; and with sinking hearts we realized that our chances of escape had vanished.



. . We all looked up. The ceiling was bulging inches downward, as though the terrific pressure of the waters were already bursting the tough steel envelope of the X-111.

CHAPTER VIII

Sapphire and Amber

IT may have been no more than thirty seconds before the silence was broken, though it felt like many, many minutes. But at length one of the newcomers, turning to his companions, the while keeping his eyes still fastened upon us, began to speak in low, rhythmic tones that were singularly musical and pleasant. I could catch not one syllable of what he said, though I strained my ears in the attempt; nor could I understand any syllable of what his fellows spoke in reply, though their voices too were so soft and sweet-sounding that they might have been intoning poetry. Yet, in spite of the gentleness of their voices, I could detect a certain excitement in their manner; and, from their casual nods and gestures in our direction, I was only too certain of the theme of their discussion.

After several minutes of whispered conversation, one of the strangers stepped toward us and raised his voice as if addressing us. As might have been foretold, I understood nothing of what he said; and, as this was no doubt what he expected, he did not look surprised, but after a moment ceased speaking and motioned us to follow him.

Since there was manifestly nothing else to do, we obeyed readily enough, and were glad indeed to find ourselves stepping once more through the doorway and out into the street, even though the half dozen strangers had grouped themselves on all sides of us as a sort of bodyguard. We knew, in fact, that we were virtually prisoners, and yet were no longer alarmed, for no imprisonment could be worse than that which we had already suffered. Also we had an intuitive sense that we should not be badly treated; whether out of consideration for our feelings or merely because they were afraid of us, our attendants did not attempt to lay hands on us or to coerce us in any way. Yet when they indicated by gestures the direction in which they desired us to walk, we had no thought of objecting, but obeyed as docilely as though they were our acknowledged masters.

For a distance of possibly two or three miles they led us with them through the city streets; and far from brooding over our predicament (which was manifestly serious), we amused ourselves with observing the sights of the town. Dozens of the inhabitants had come out to peer at us as we strode past; and, though they kept at a cautious distance, we could see them clearly enough: their slender, graceful forms and blond features, their amiable blue eyes and rippling, unbound hair, their loose-hanging, light-tinted robes, variously colored from buff and lilac to azure and pale rose, gave them the appearance less of human beings than of walking butterflies or flowers.

But even more interesting to us than these humans was the architecture of the town. We were fascinated, first of all, by the very pavement beneath us, which was of baked clay worked into a multihued and picturesque mosaic; we were still more fascinated by the buildings, which on close observation proved to be even more artistically designed than we had imagined, for exquisite little statues abounded in niches between the columns or under the domes and spires, and superb frescoes decorated the ceilings of the numberless colonnades and the outside walls of temples, and curving walks wound gracefully between terraces adorned with a lovely waxen flower or around the brink of the shimmering rainbowed fountains. I particularly noted the width of the avenues, in whose spacious reaches and wide adjoining courts the bright-robed children laughed and played; and I was surprised to observe that the buildings, instead of being jammed together in the modern box-like fashion, were each separated from their neighbors by broad paved ways or wide patches of vegetation, so that the whole gave an uncrowded and leisurely and yet skilfully patterned effect.

But magnificent as were the edifices in their garb of sandstone or granite or many-hued marble, the most extraordinary by far was that to which our guides ultimately led us. It was not the size of the structure that distinguished it, since the city boasted far larger buildings, and size in itself did not seem to have been an object with the builders; but the quality of the masonry and the style of the workmanship had surely no parallel in human experience. For the walls and the interior circles of columns were not of any material ever employed before, not of steel or of stone, of brick or of clay, or gold or of ebony; they were of a translucent yellow hue, the hue of amber, and seemed to be composed, if not actually of amber, at least of glass tinted amber color. This, however, was scarcely the most remarkable fact, for the floor was likewise translucent, and shone with an entrancing blue, the blue of sapphire; and sapphire seemed also the substance of the fretted and vaulted ceiling, from which hung images of great birds with wide-spread wings, giving a startling illusion of flight. Three successive circles of columns, each more massive than the last and all adorned at the base with bas-reliefs of strange fishes and stranger sea plants, supported the great arching expanse of the roof; and completely enclosed by the columns, on a steep and curving incline of the sapphire floor, were row after row of amber seats grouped in a half circle about a flat open space, and forming—so it seemed to me—a Grecian theatre of unique design.

AS Rawson and I accompanied our guides into this queer building, we were so captivated by the architecture and so enthralled by the silence and the weird half-light of sapphire and amber that we did not at first observe that other human beings had preceded us into the place. It was long, indeed, before we could recover from the awed sense of entering some cathedral where all is reverential and unworldly; and it was long before, turning our eyes upon the theatre with its rows and rows of seats, we observed that not all the chairs were vacant as we had at first assumed. In the front tiers sat perhaps a hundred light-gowned individuals whose sedate and earnest faces proclaimed that they were convened for some solemn purpose.

Our arrival was greeted by a sudden murmuring of low, musical voices, but by nothing more demonstrative; and our presence was doubtless explained by our attendants, who spoke a few words to the assembled group, after which they took seats to one side and motioned us to do likewise. We obeyed readily enough, but as I crossed the room to take my designated place, I received a sudden shock, an electrical shock of pleasure, such as one experiences upon meeting a friend unexpectedly in a strange city. In the foremost row, staring up at me with a most curious and kindly air, sat that enchanting woman whom I had seen dancing along the colonnades! As a sober and practical man, and one already in love with the gracious Alma Huntley, I should no doubt have regarded her with a wholly aloof and impersonal air; but I was sadly impressionable, alas! and was almost transfixed with joy at sight of those shining Madonna features and clear magnetic great blue eyes. For

an instant, indeed, I actually stopped short in my tracks, until, regaining my presence of mind, I hastened toward my seat shamefaced at having so betrayed myself. It was several minutes before I ventured again to glance toward the fair one, and then she was looking in an opposite direction; and, stare at her as I might, she seemed totally oblivious of my existence.

I am afraid that, in the ensuing hour, my thoughts were more on her than on proceedings in the theatre. I was aware, indeed, that some sort of debate was in progress, a discussion in which most of the spectators took part and during which Rawson and I were more than once pointed out with significant gestures. But, since I could understand not one word of what was spoken, I let my imagination travel to the beautiful unknown, and tried to fancy how it would feel to be befriended by so fairy-like a creature. Even to speak a word with her, I thought, would be a delight, and to hold a conversation with her would be the rarest of good fortune. Of course, her face might belie her character, and she might be unintelligent as she was beautiful; yet I was convinced that a rare soul shone out of the calm seductive depths of her eyes, and was more than willing to believe that she combined the wisdom of a Socrates with the charms of an Aphrodite.

So pleasantly was I occupied in contemplating this fascinating being and her scarcely less fascinating fellows, that it seemed but a moment before the debate was over and the assembled men and women rose from their seats and began to depart. With a start I sprang to my feet, suddenly realizing that the assemblage had perhaps reached some critical decision regarding me. And when four or five of the men approached Rawson and myself and motioned us away, I had the feeling of a captive being led back into imprisonment. The loveliest of all women had now been lost to view amid the crowd, and I was sadder at her disappearance than at thought of my personal sufferings; but as I walked slowly out of that sapphire and amber palace, gentle strains of music began to play on unseen instruments, rippling delightedly as waves on a calm sea; and gradually and insensibly I was comforted, and somehow I was convinced that I should see that glorious womanly apparition again.

ONCE more we were escorted through the city streets, but this time had only a few hundred yards to walk. After a minute or two we were led up the steps of a many-columned marble mansion, and into a long hall whose stained glass windows cast a subdued illumination upon a score of vivid paintings. We were wondering what to do, when our guides motioned us to cushioned seats that seemed made of woven seaweed; and after we had settled ourselves at ease in the great sofa-like chairs, two of the men disappeared momentarily and returned with a feast of some singular substance reminding me of mushrooms flavored with a sprinkling of honey. At first we were suspicious and reluctant to eat; but the honest and frankly puzzled faces of our hosts convinced us of our folly; and we found the dish, while strange to our palates, not only appetizing but invigorating after our long fast.

After we had eaten and the remains of the meal had been borne away, we were treated to a still greater surprise. A man came stalking in laden with five or six variously colored cloths, which I recognized as the native costumes; and, having spread these out before us, he motioned us to discard our own clothing and take our choice of the local apparel. Our attendants then politely withdrew, leaving us more perplexed than ever.

But it was long before we could make up our minds to array ourselves in the native garb. And while we stood hesitating, casting occasional disdainful glances at the colored garments before making the decision which we knew we ultimately must make, our attention was distracted by the paintings that adorned the walls. Alhough all were executed with the deft and flawless hand of a master, they were in a sense different from any paintings I had ever seen before; and what struck me in particular was not so much their peculiar style of art, which combined a minute realism with an almost cosmic suggestiveness, as their arresting and unparalleled subject-matter. Half of them were of a marine type, and depicted ocean caves where the giant squid or octopus wavered through the gray depths, or gardens of the ocean floor where the many-branching coral was the playground for shimmering blue and yellow fishes; the other half, and the most remarkable by far, portrayed scenes of ruin and destruction on a scale that might have staggered the most daring imagination. One of them, for example, pictured a city with slender skyscrapers not unlike those of modern New York, but all the skyscrapers were crumpled and toppling as though from some titanic blast; another, which likewise represented a many-spired city, showed the ocean rolling up in one colossal wave and battering and washing away the buildings as a rain storm may wash away a child's sand castles; while a third, and by all odds the most ghastly of the group, depicted a sea bottom strewn with the wreckage of great stone edifices, in whose vacant towers and windows and among whose shattered courts the sword-fish and the eel sported and slunk and the fanged shark pursued its prey.

"Strange!" I remarked to Rawson. "What peculiarly morbid people is this that its artists should delight in scenes of flood and ruin? Or is it that its painters are striving to represent some actual disaster, some overwhelming ancient catastrophe unheard of on earth?"

Hoping to find an answer to these questions, I strained my eyes over the inscriptions that marked each picture—inscriptions in the near-Greek characters I had already tried to decipher. As before, I had at first no success in translation; but, having nothing else to do, I persevered; and once again I ended by construing two or three words—words that left me only more deeply mystified. "After the Submergence," was the legend that explained the picture of the ruined town at the sea bottom; and, noting how closely this phrase resembled those I had previously interpreted, I was forced to conclude that "The Submergence" was indeed some definite historical event. But when it had occurred or how was still a question as unanswerable as though it had concerned the planet Mars.

"It is possible that we will never be able to solve the problem." I was observing to Rawson, when suddenly I heard that which made me stop short in amazement, momentarily forgetting all about tidal waves and sunken cities.

"Saints in heaven, that's a good one! That's the time I put one over on you, boys!" came to me in indistinct tones, accompanied by a loud guffaw; and Rawson and I stared at one another in astonishment, bewildered as men who have seen a ghost.

"Stranahan!" we cried in one voice; and the tears were ready to flow at the thought that we had found our lost companion.

A moment later, having made our way through a

columned hallway into an adjoining room, we were met by the strangest sight we had yet seen in this land of many wonders.

Sprawled haphazard on the floor, absorbed in the distribution of a pack of cards, were our four lost fellow seamen, all of them looking grotesque indeed in their colored native garments, and Stranahan appearing particularly outlandish in his gown of pale green, his trouser legs showing from beneath, his blue sailor's blouse conspicuous through the open neck in front!

CHAPTER IX

The Will of the Masters

"LORD have mercy on me, if it ain't Harkness! And Rawson, too!" cried Stranahan, leaping to his feet, and seizing our hands in a hearty grip. "By all things holy, I thought I'd never see you again!"

For a moment we were unable to reply, so great was the confusion of shouts, greetings, and excited questionings from our four new-found companions. Though we were fully as delighted as they, our first words came in inchoate, mumbled phrases, for our surprise was apparently even greater than theirs.

"Well, and what are you doing in this part of the country?" Stranahan at length inquired, with a smile. "I thought you were safe in the old X-111."

"Nothing is safe in the X-111," I replied. "Captain Gavison sent us out after you when you didn't come back."

"I'm sorry to hear that," declared Stranahan, ruefully. "You know I hate to disobey orders, but I'm afraid I'll have to. We won't be coming back just yet."

"What makes you think that?" I demanded, with sudden misgivings.

"I don't think it—I know it," he maintained, with an air of certainty. And, leaning on one foot against a marble column while his brawny hand stroked his chin, he continued, ruminatingly, "Suffering sea snakes, do you take me for a fool? Do you think I'd be here if I could find a way out?"

"But can't you?" I questioned, innocently.

"No, by the devil, I can't!" he swore. "Neither can you! We're all prisoners here!"

"What? Prisoners in this building" I gasped.

"No, not in this building! In this town!" corrected Stranahan.

"In this town?" Despite my agitation, I began to laugh. "This town makes a fair-sized jail."

"You won't think so for long!" warned Stranahan, with all the fury of conviction. "The Lord strike my heart from my breast if I ever saw a deader place—except maybe my own home town on Sunday afternoons!"

Following this outburst, Stranahan recounted his recent experiences, which were not altogether different from our own. Like us, he and Ripley had reached the city following an ambling excursion among the outlying colonnades and temples; but unlike us, they had not been so unfortunate as to be trapped in one of the buildings. In fact, they had suffered a different misfortune entirely. Upon entering the city, they had been confronted by several of the natives; and, surmising that these strange beings were hostilely disposed, the terrified Stranahan had whipped out his revolver and fired toward the crowd. So far as was known, no one had been injured, but all had been badly frightened by the report; and for a while, the two seamen had had the freedom of the town.

They were ultimately stopped, however, by a band of determined-looking natives. Though apparently unarmed, and though they used no violence, these men overpowered the intruders in some inexplicable way. Not only were Stranahan and Ripley deprived of their pistols, but they were rendered docile as children, and were conducted, as we had been, to the place of amber and sapphire, where a hundred pale-robed individuals debated and passed on their fate. Next they were brought to their present dwelling, where they were clothed and fed, and where they were reunited with Stangale and Howlett, who had preceded them to the city. They had now been living here for several days, and during that time had been treated with unexpected civility and kindness and even allowed to roam at will through the city; but whenever they had approached the boundaries of the town, they had encountered a band of citizens who, by shouts and gestures and a mysterious but irresistible power of suggestion, had given them to understand that they were not to leave.

Stranahan was approaching the end of his recital, and was telling us how he had been compelled to wear the native costume and how his meals had been brought to him regularly twice each day, when he was interrupted by the entrance of several natives, who had been looking for us in the adjoining room and seemed a little annoyed at our disappearance. Unceremoniously they led us back to the other apartment, where the half dozen robes were lying in wait for us; and, perceiving from their gestures that we would do well to don the native garb, I promptly arrayed myself in a gown of pale lavender, while Rawson exchanged his sailor's suit for a costume of daintiest yellow. Both of us had difficulty in adjusting the garments, which were fastened at the shoulder by a fish-bone device resembling a safety-pin; and we had our hesitation about the sandals, which were slipped on at a stroke and yet were held firmly in place by inconspicuous cords. But though we puzzled over our new apparel for many minutes, Rawson found in the end that he had his on inside out, while the front of mine was where the rear should have been. Of course, we did not discover these mistakes for ourselves. Our attendants, on returning to see us fully attired, indicated the errors with smiles and suppressed laughter; and with their aid, we managed to array ourselves almost like self-respecting natives.

FORTUNATELY, we had little time just then to notice how ridiculous we looked in our colored gowns. As soon as the perplexing business of dressing was settled, one of the men motioned me to a sofa in a corner of the room, where he took a seat beside me, as though for some important purpose; and a second similarly led Rawson to an opposite corner, while the other natives unceremoniously took their leave. My particular attendant, who was a tall man, neither young nor old, with classic features and keen but kindly gray eyes peering from beneath a wide expanse of forehead, now began to go through a series of apparently meaningless gestures, accompanied by no less meaningless words. First he would tap his head while emitting a peculiar sound; then he would tap his breast while emitting another peculiar sound; then he would touch his arm, his knee, his foot, always slowly and carefully pronouncing one or two unintelligible syllables. In the beginning, I was inclined to wonder whether he was not mad, but this view was not furthered by the discovery that Rawson's attendant was conducting a similar performance. It was doubtless only my own stupidity that prevented me from grasping the truth

immediately. At length my companion drew a small pad of paper from his pocket and began to write upon it with an instrument resembling a fountain pen, and I understood clearly enough then that he was trying to teach me his language; so I gave him my undivided attention, noting carefully each object he touched and the corresponding sounds, and noted particularly the characters he jotted down upon the paper.

Then suddenly I saw light amid the darkness! Although this was but my first lesson, I was making faster progress than either of us could have anticipated —my knowledge of ancient Greek was proving invaluable! At the first glance, I observed the resemblance between the letters my instructor was inditing and those of the old Greek, even as I had noticed the resemblance on the stone inscriptions; and it was not many minutes before I discovered that some of the words, although not to be recognized when pronounced, were written in a style closely similar to the Greek, and were obviously built upon Greek roots. This was not true of all the words, but it was true of such a large percentage, that I had hopes of soon being able to speak the language and so to solve the mystery of this fantastic deep-sea people.

After about two hours, my instructor rose from his seat, shoved the pad of paper back into his pocket, and indicated that our lessons were over for the day. But he smiled upon me graciously, as though to indicate that I was a not unpromising pupil; and he spoke a word which I thought I recognized as "To-morrow," after which he saluted me with a courteous wave of the hand, and joining Rawson's instructor, went ambling leisurely out of view.

It was with a wry smile that Rawson rejoined me. "Say, did you get anything out of it at all?" he inquired. "I just couldn't make head or tail of it. Heavens, at this rate it would take me ten years to learn my A, B, C's!"

I did not confide that I had private reasons for feeling more optimistic than my friend. But, after I had offered to help and was rejected, I was content to let the conversation drift to other subjects.

Rawson was now annoyingly given to useless lamentations. Hotly he deplored our plight; he declared that he no longer saw anything romantic about it, and least of all perceived anything romantic about being made to go to school again; and he reminded me time after time of Captain Gavison and the crew, whom we had last seen stranded in the wilderness with the disabled X-111, and who were no doubt awaiting our return in hope that was fast giving way to despair. Though I did not share in Rawson's dislike of our present quarters, and though I was deterred from leaving, not only by hopes of learning the language but by thoughts of the nameless fair one, yet I had to listen when Rawson spoke of our duty to our waiting comrades; and, in spite of the forbidding precedent set by Stranahan and Ripley, I could not but consent to try to return to our shipmates.

As the doors of our dwelling were wide open and there was no one to interfere with us, we sauntered forthwith into the streets. As usual, we found them almost deserted, and so had no hesitation in proceeding along the winding walks and broad avenues and past the innumerable terraces, courts and temples in the direction from which we had entered the city. As the various distinctive gardens and palaces constituted unmistakable landmarks, we were seldom at a loss as to our route, and in little more than half an hour we found ourselves at the threshold of the town, before that odd statue-like edifice where we had been imprisoned. The path of escape now seemed open, and our flight appeared so easy that we paused momentarily, almost with misgivings at having encountered no obstacles. But not a person was in sight, and no sign of any impediment was visible, and so in surprise we started up that slope which led to the colonnades and outlying temples.

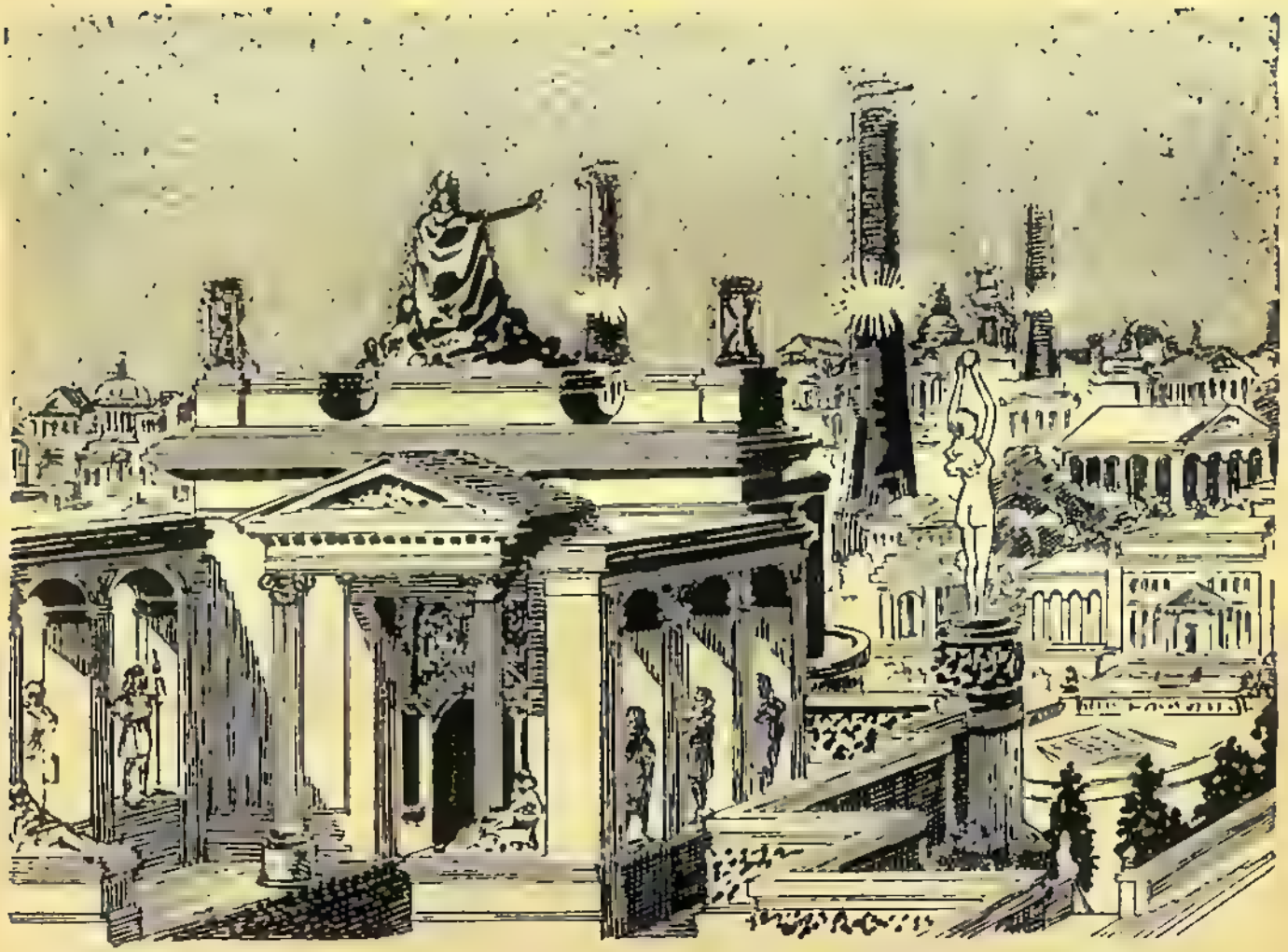
We had almost reached the top, and I was already deep in regrets at leaving this charming city just as it was becoming so interesting, when half a score of pale-gowned individuals suddenly appeared from above the ridge, their vociferous cries and commanding gestures warning us back. They carried no weapon, yet they could not have been more imperious had they borne loaded rifles; there seemed almost to be some hidden compulsion, some irresistible magnetism about them, so that our weak wills quailed and bowed to theirs, and we retreated before them as impulsively as a singed animal retreats before fire. I do not know why it was, for they surely would not have set violent hands upon us; but we no more thought of disobeying them than a trained dog thinks of disobeying its master; and back to the city we hastened, while they followed on our heels with faces stern and set; and, having re-entered the town, we made our way directly to the building we had just left, as though some superior mind controlled our movements and we were no longer free.

Upon our return, we met with another surprise. Naturally, we were prompted to seek Stranahan and our three other shipmates again; but we had expected that they would be occupied, as before, by cards or some other time-killing game. Instead, we found them seated in the four corners of the room, each with a companion (needless to say, a native); and from the peculiar gestures of those companions and their habit of writing occasionally on pads of paper, we recognized that they were giving instructions in the language of the land. But this in itself was not the surprising fact. Two of the four newcomers were ladies, one of them being of matronly years; but the other, who sat opposite Stranahan, smilingly making notes with her pen, was not only in the full bloom of youth, but had that singularly sweet cast of countenance, those singularly clear and magnetic large blue eyes, which could belong to only one woman in the world!

CHAPTER X

Discoveries

GREAT as was my joy upon observing that the entrancing mysterious lady was Stranahan's tutor, it was to be some time before her daily proximity had any effect upon my life. And meanwhile I was resigning myself to a regular routine, a routine only partly of my own choosing, and largely prescribed by those whom I had come to consider my masters. Each night (and by night I mean the period of eight or ten hours when the golden orbs were quenched and the city was in total blackness) I would sleep with Rawson and Stranahan on screened open-air rooms on the roof. And each day I would live almost as though by formula. Aroused by the burst of light that marked the queer underworld dawn, I would take a plunge in a salt-water swimming pool in a court of our apartment. A few minutes later I would join my companions in a repast of some fragile little native cakes and of some queer fruit like a cross between the apricot and peach, which were brought to us regularly by well-laden carriers whom I observed likewise supplying neighboring houses. Breakfast over,



. . Beneath us, at a distance that may have been five hundred feet and may have been a thousand, the vaults and domes and columns of wave or volcano . . . Palace after magnificent palace, many seemingly modelled by architects of old Greece, went gliding by beneath us; and one or two colossal

we were free for a while; and then I would usually go rambling about the city with Rawson or Stranahan, or sometimes with all my five former shipmates; and we would have a merry time laughing and chatting, inspecting the various palaces, colonnades and gardens, and poking fun at any object that happened to strike us as curious or absurd.

After an hour or two we would return to our apartments, to await the arrival of our tutors, who had a habit of appearing in a band of six (one for each of us) sometime toward the end of the morning. Stranahan was still the most fortunate of us all, since for many weeks his tutor continued to be that woman of the Madonna features and magnetic large blue eyes; but the rest of us were also fortunate in a way, for she would always beam upon us with bright "Good morning" in the native tongue; and I personally had hopes that the time was not far-off when we should be better acquainted.

At the end of perhaps two hours, the tutors would leave for the day; but they would always provide us with ample work in the shape of simple exercises to be written or of passages to be deciphered in text-books of the kind evidently used for six-year-olds. This "home-work" (as Rawson designated it) would keep us busy until late in the afternoon, when a native would arrive with a tray containing various savory viands: a gray bread made from a grain with a flavor like walnuts; a succulent vegetable like French toast well browned; a spiced, starchy food reminding me vaguely of baked potatoes; cakes of a hundred varieties, and fruits shaped like tomatoes and tasting like muscat grapes, or elongated like cucumbers and flavored as oranges, or round and large as cantaloupes and substantial as bananas. But while we were of course delighted at the abundance of these appetizing unfamiliar foods, we were not a little surprised—and not a little disappointed—at the absence of much that we would once have considered essential; and we constantly wondered why it was that no meat nor fish nor any other animal product found its place on the bill of fare.

After this meal (the second and last for the day) we were once more free to do as we wished; and we would ordinarily spend the time until dark in strolling around the city, or in sitting about in a little circle exchanging anecdotes, or in propounding theories as to where we were and how we had arrived, or in playing cards or any other little game that we could devise. Except for our tutors, we came into contact with none of the natives; we were too ignorant of the language to speak with the occasional few whom we passed on the streets; and as yet we knew virtually nothing of how they lived.

But we were much less concerned about the natives than about our comrades of the X-111. We were still restrained in the city by the mysterious, irresistible power of compulsion exercised by our hosts; and though the days were lengthening into weeks, no word of Captain Gavison and our absent shipmates had reached us. For all that we could say, they might have perished of starvation or fallen through a black hole in the ground—or, more plausibly, they might have been discovered by the natives, and led as cap-

Innumerable stone edifices shone palely and with sallow luster. Surely, we thought, this was some unheard-of Athens, doomed long ago by tidal countless statues, tall as the buildings, pointed up at us with hands that were uncannily life-like; wide avenue after wide avenue flashed by, theatres of Grecian design . . .

tives to lodgings miles away. Should we see them soon, or at least have news of them? or should we never learn what had befallen them? There was no way to decide except to wait—and the process of waiting was distressingly slow.

BUT I was secretly determined to do everything possible to hasten events. Obviously, the first necessity was to understand the native language—hence I put forth every effort to learn to read and write. Less because of my natural linguistic tendencies than because of my acquaintance with ancient Greek, I was making more rapid progress than any of my fellows, and was acquiring the rudiments of a speaking and reading knowledge. Not only did my own ears tell me so, but my instructor admitted as much by his occasional nods of approval, and now and then even by a "Very Good" or "Excellent" when I was speaking or reciting to him. But not content with my normal rate of advance, I was fortifying myself with much secret practice. Often I would refrain from joining my comrades in their morning and evening strolls and pastimes, and would remain quietly in my room with a pad of paper and a pencil supplied me by my tutor. I would devote hours to writing in the native alphabet, until I could employ it with facility and assurance; or I would jot down a list of words and phrases and repeat them aloud time after time, trying to imitate the peculiar accentuation of my instructor. The latter task in particular was difficult and even painful, and subjected me more than once to ridicule, when Stranahan or the others entered the room unexpectedly and found me apparently talking to myself. But I persisted in spite of discouragements, and had hopes that, instead of commanding but a few scattered words and phrases, I would shortly be able to conduct an extended conversation.

It was only natural, however, that I should be able to read the language before I could speak it. Not more than two or three weeks had passed before I felt capable of deciphering any average native document. But, unfortunately, I had little opportunity to practice my talents, for the only written material I saw was in the shape of the simple exercise books lent me by my instructor. These, while admirably adapted for clarifying grammatical problems, were entirely devoid of vital information; and when I asked my instructor for more edifying works, I did not seem able to make him understand, for what he brought me was merely a more advanced exercise book.

Consequently, I had every reason to be grateful for that chance which put me in possession of several volumes designed for adult readers. For lack of better occupation, Rawson and I were minutely inspecting our apartments one afternoon, scrutinizing in particular the picturesque patterns of the veined marble walls, when suddenly I stopped short with a cry of surprise, startled at sight of a little rectangle faintly although unmistakably engraved in otherwise unbroken surface of the marble.

Promptly I informed Rawson of my discovery. He shared in my surprise, and excitedly suggested that this was some mysterious trap-door.

Although I saw no reason to agree with him, I approached the rectangular patch to examine it more closely, and in so doing rested my hand appraisingly on the marble surface.

To my utter amazement, a portion of the wall gave way, swinging inward as if on noiseless hinges!

But if Rawson had had visions of secret corridors and darkened chambers, he was to be disappointed. The displaced rectangle revealed not a mysterious passageway, but a little closet or vault possibly three feet deep—a vault filled to the brim with treasure! At least, it was filled with what I regarded as treasure, for within it were piled scores of books!

Hastily I reached for the nearest volume—a heavy tome bound in what I took to be a sort of artificial leather. The title filled me with rejoicing: it was a "Lexicon of the More Commonly Used Words."

Aided by the bewildered Rawson, I at once examined the entire collection. Although he could decipher not a word, Rawson feigned the profoundest interest; and, indeed, he may well have been interested, for, as I read and translated the titles, I was making discovery after extraordinary discovery. Not that any of the books were those works of sheer information which I most desired, but that they all embodied significant hints and clues. Some, like the inscriptions I had observed among the colonnades, seemed to refer to some great disaster, as in the case of one entitled, "Artistic Progress Since the Destruction"; another, which was called "Speculations Concerning the Supermarine World," fortified my impression of being in some inexplicably buried land; while several were treatises on such difficult subjects as "Intra-Atomic Engineering," "Marine Valves and Their Construction," and "The Creation of Artificial Sunlight."

But the book that caused me the greatest surprise—a book that struck me as at once a priceless find and an insoluble mystery—was the well-thumbed yellowing little volume at the very bottom of the heap. Even today, when all that passed in those enigmatic realms is an old and oft-repeated story, I have difficulty in repressing my astonishment at that discovery. Imagine the bewilderment of one who, having voyaged to another world, suddenly receives news of familiar things, and at the same time learns unsuspected facts about the familiar! Imagine this, and you will have only a vague notion of the amazement I felt when, turning the pages of the book in that unknown cavernland, I recognized the name of—Homer!

And not only did I recognize the name of Homer, but I found it affixed to a work not previously catalogued among the productions of the great Attic bard! "Telegonus" was the title—and instantly I recalled that there had been a legend among post-Homeric writers of one Telegonus, the son of Odysseus and Circe, who had been sent by his enchantress mother in search of his father, and had slain his sire without realizing his identity.

One may be sure that I wasted no time about plunging into the book. One may be sure that I took no heed of the surprised exclamations of Rawson, nor even paused for more than a word of explanation, but read and read as fast as my knowledge of the language would permit. Truly, the poem was Homeric in quality!—I recognized at once the swing of the inimitable hexameter, handled with masterly craftsmanship; and the opening passages, executed with epic dash and sweep, simplicity and power, convinced me that here was a work worthy of standing side by side with "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey."

But how came the poem to be here in this weird undersea realm? How came these submerged people to possess an Homeric work unknown to the modern world? These were the questions that perplexed me as I excitedly followed stanza after noble stanza; and ponder the problem as I might, debate it as I would with myself or the eager Rawson, I could conceive of no explanation, but was as mystified as if I had traveled to Mars and found the people addressing me in English or presenting me with copies of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER XI

Questions and Answers

THE chief effect of the discovery of the books was to make me doubly anxious to speak the native tongue. Not one of the score of volumes cast any light on the problems that bewildered me, and least of all on the mystery of Homer's "Telegonus"; and it was apparent that I should remain in ignorance until I could converse with the natives. Accordingly, I had need of that rarest of all qualities, a virtue in which I am almost wholly lacking—patience. Stifling my eagerness and curiosity as best I could, I had to plod away for days and days in acquiring new native words and phrases and in practicing speaking in the solitude of my own rooms. The task was far from pleasant, and the suspense and the waiting were harrying; but I was like a traveler following a trail through an unfamiliar jungle; and, feverish as I was to escape, I had no choice except to persist on the one visible course.

But had I not been so eager to batter down the mystery, I would have found abundant cause for encouragement. I was still progressing, progressing rapidly, attaining a speaking knowledge of the language with a speed possible only for one long trained as a linguist. And, as the result of many a secret conversation, which I held with myself by way of practice, I advanced swiftly to the point of being able to exchange ideas with the natives. At least, I felt that I had advanced to that point, and awaited only opportunity to test my new-won powers.

The obvious course would have been to address myself to my tutor, and several times I was on the point of doing so, but on each occasion he seemed so absorbed in the day's exercises, that I decided to postpone the experiment. In the end, however, I should no doubt have opened my mind to him—had not chance intervened and sent me a more charming informant.

I had of course not forgotten that entrancing Madonna-like woman who was Stranahan's tutor. Indeed, I could not easily have forgotten her, for her exquisite features and bright eyes kept flashing before me at all hours of the day and night; and already I felt myself as completely subject to her spell as Dante to the spell of a Beatrice. Under the witchery of her influence, Alma Huntley was becoming no more than the figment of a remote and misty past—and yet I was not even acquainted with the fair unknown, I had never exchanged more than a formal greeting with her. I scarcely knew how to sow the seeds even for a casual friendship, and what she was like at heart and how she would react to my advances, were matters of pure conjecture.

But the time was to come when she would be more to me than one to be admired at a distance. She was, in fact, to serve in a double rôle: for not only was she to fascinate me with her companionship, but she was to cast light upon those problems which were tantalizing me.

Although I caught glimpses of her almost every morning when she came as Stranahan's instructor, yet

I would have had little chance to speak with her even had I chosen, since (as I have already related) she ordinarily arrived and left in the company of the other tutors. But one day—perhaps because she had some particularly difficult bit of grammar to explain—she lingered over her work much longer than usual, and was so absorbed in it that she did not appear to notice that her fellow teachers had left. At the moment I did not perceive that this was my opportunity; but good fortune was to be with me, and when she emerged from the marble doors of our home, I happened to be strolling along the colonnade not a hundred yards away.

At first it was almost a shock to me to see her come unaccompanied toward me—a shock in which intense pleasure was mingled with something akin to dread. For a moment I had an impulse to hide behind one of the great stone columns; fortunately, I thrust this foolish desire from me, and, after a few seconds, had almost regained my composure.

As she approached, I could scarcely take my gaze from her. Upon her face was a serene, placid expression, such as she almost always wore; but the shadow of a smile flickered about her lips, and her great blue eyes were withdrawn as if they saw not the world wherein she walked but only some calm and perfect inner vision.

Slowly I advanced, and diffidently placed myself in her path. At first she did not seem to see me, but in an instant, almost as though she had been expecting some one, her gaze was lifted to meet mine; and no surprise was marked there, nor any trace of annoyance, only an unlooked-for pleasure. In low, musical tones, and with grace that to me seemed goddess-like, she murmured "Good morning," while such a lovely and unmatched light shone in her eyes and such transfiguring inner radiance illumined her features, that I felt that I had encountered an immortal.

"Good morning," I replied, in the native dialect, and at the cost of greater effort than I would have cared to admit; and I shuddered inwardly lest I give her cause for laughter.

She smiled charmingly, and was about to pass on, when in desperation I strove to detain her. "I beg your pardon," said I, stiffly, speaking almost by rote in phrases I had memorized days before. "I beg your pardon, but have you a minute to spare? There are one or two questions I should like very much to ask you."

FOR an instant she stared at me in transparent surprise. But a smile played lightly about the corners of her mouth, and apparently she was not offended. "Why, of course, you may ask any question you want," she replied, more puzzled than annoyed. And, pointing down the colonnade to a circular marble bench enclosed by a ring of slender columns, she continued, "Let us go over there. Then we can talk, if you wish."

In silence we traversed the intervening two or three hundred yards. My heart was so full that I could not have spoken had I desired; I could scarcely credit my double good fortune in having won this lady's good will and in speaking well enough to be understood by her.

And when at length I found myself seated at her side, her vivid blue eyes looking inquiringly and yet kindly into my own, I felt as one who enters the land of dreams come true. It was with difficulty that I answered when, in low, sweet tones, she asked me what it was that I desired to know; and when the first words came to me, they were forced out only by an effort of the will, for I should much have preferred to sit there in silence, staring and staring at her animated lovely face, her sharp-cut classic profile and symmetrically modelled features.

But, unfortunately, the laws of human intercourse demanded that I do more than gaze at her in speechless rapture. And I answered her question, therefore, with one or two commonplace remarks which expressed nothing of the exaltation within me, and which could have conveyed no high opinion of my intelligence. "I am a stranger in this land," said I, picking my words with a translator's care, "and so find many things here which perplex me. I was wondering whether you would not be good enough to help me. Am I imposing too much upon your kindness?"

"Oh, no, of course not," she murmured; and as she spoke I noted that her upper lip trembled slightly, as though from extreme sensitiveness and sympathy. "Do you not know that it would be a pleasure to be of aid?"

I was enchanted by this reply, for there could be no doubting the utter candor and sincerity in her earnest blue eyes, which were glowing with a softness equal to the magnetism they sometimes displayed.

Encouraged to the point of boldness, I decided upon a daring step. "Before I ask any other question," I ventured, "might it not be well for us to know each other's names?"

"Why, of course," she agreed. "My name is Aelios."

"Aelios!" I repeated, charmed by the sound. "What a delightful name! And what is your other name, may I ask?"

"My other name?" she echoed, astonished. "What other name do you mean?"

I saw that somehow I had made a mistake. "Why, haven't you another name?" I inquired, with distinct loss of confidence.

"Another name?" She tittered delightedly, as though enjoying a rare joke. "Well, if that isn't the most outlandish idea! What do you think I'd do with another name?"

"Why, that—that's not for me to say," I stammered. "Only, where I come from, every one has at least two or three names."

"Oh, how perfectly ridiculous!" she exclaimed. "Just as if we haven't enough to remember one name apiece!"

She paused momentarily, and I was too much embarrassed to resume the conversation. Fortunately, she continued without my aid. "How many names have you?" she inquired; and the playful light in her eyes told me that she could not have been more amused if asking how many hands or feet I had.

"Only two," I admitted, glad that I had not to confess to three or four. "I am called Anson Harkness."

"Anson Harkness," she repeated, slowly, as if savoring the peculiar sound. "Why, if that isn't the strangest name I ever heard!"

"Where I come from it isn't considered strange," I assured her. "Of course, in my country everything is very different—"

"Yes, I know," she interposed. "You come from above the sea."

"How do you know?" I cried, astonished.

Again she peered at me in surprise, and almost, I thought, with something of that puzzled air with which one regards a child who persists in asking the ridiculous. "Why, of course you must come from above the sea," she explained. "Where else is there to come from?"

"And do the people here all know we come from above the sea?"

"Yes, indeed," declared Aelios, a naive seriousness replacing the frolicsome air of the moment before. "That's what we've all been worrying about. We thought we were proof against invasions from above, and we simply can't understand how you got here. Why, for three thousand years the upper world doesn't seem even to have suspected our existence."

"Three thousand years?" I burst forth. "Three thousand years? Then, for God's sake, how old is this land of yours? And, in heaven's name, what country is this, anyway?"

"Why, I thought you knew," murmured Aelios, with a look of surprise. "This is Atlantis, of course."

"Atlantis!" I ejaculated, in overpowering amazement. "Atlantis!" And confused visions of a lost continent swarmed through my mind, and I wondered whether this could be the sunken world described by Plato.

But before I could utter another word, my attention was diverted by an unpardonable intrusion. "Great shades of Alexander, having a nice little tête-a-tête, are you?" came a familiar voice from the rear; and Stranahan, stalking up uninvited, deposited himself on a seat just to the left of Aelios, and grinningly requested us not to heed him, but to go right on with our little talk.

CHAPTER XII

The Submergence

THE arrival of Stranahan, of course, had its effect. Not only did he interrupt my conversation with Aelios at a crucial point, but he made it impossible for the discussion to take a personal turn. I realized, to be sure, that he was actuated by motives of good fellowship, but I felt that he exhibited remarkably poor sense; and I am afraid that I displayed not a little of my displeasure in the forced welcome that I frowned upon the intruder. But Stranahan appeared to be afflicted with no foolish sensitiveness; and, having decided to join us, he seemed not to notice the frozen reception I accorded him.

And like one determined to see things through to the end, he remained resolutely with us. He seemed scarcely discouraged by his limited knowledge of the language, which made him a total stranger to most of what we were saying; and for a good part of our conversation, he sat by in gaping ignorance, venturing an occasional remark with such poor display of grammar and pronunciation that I could only smile.

Yet our discussion was so engrossing that for minutes at a time I quite forgot the existence of Stranahan. Even the bright sparkling eyes of Aelios had for the moment no more than an impersonal interest for me, for I found myself making a discovery so strange, so amazing and so utterly unprecedented as to upset my conception of human history.

"Can this really be Atlantis?" I heard myself inquiring, once the disturbance created by Stranahan's arrival had subsided. "Can this really be the famous lost Atlantis?"

"The lost Atlantis?" repeated Aelios, looking perplexed. "I didn't know there was any lost Atlantis."

I explained as briefly as possible the legend of the ancient continent that was said to have sunk beneath the sea. "If there's any truth in the story, that was one of the greatest disasters in history," I remarked, trying to lend importance to what I felt to be but the flimsies of myths.

"Disaster!" echoed Aelios, her perplexity deepening. "Disaster! This is the first time I ever heard any one call the submergence a disaster!"

"Do you mean, then, that there actually was a submergence?" I demanded. "That a whole continent sank beneath the waves?"

"Why, of course!" she exclaimed, astonished at so self-evident a question. "How else do you think we got here beneath the sea?" And she pointed significantly to the great greenish roof and the bright, golden orbs above us, while into her eyes came a wonderfully sweet, indulgent light, as into the eyes of one who delights to teach children the obvious.

"Where did you suppose we could be now," she continued, "except in Archeon, the Capital of Atlantis?"

It was at this point that Stranahan thought it time to let himself be heard. He drew his lips far apart as if to speak, uttered an inarticulate syllable or two, and then stopped abruptly short, as though unable to frame the desired words.

"What is it, my friend?" asked Aelios, turning to Stranahan with a gracious smile. But since Stranahan could only gape idiotically in reply, I thought it my duty to answer for him.

"What I cannot understand," I said, returning to the question that had been puzzling me most of all, "is that you say there was a submergence, and yet seem to think it was not a disaster. Surely, if the whole continent of Atlantis was lost—"

"What makes you think the whole continent was lost?" demanded Aelios, a quizzical, almost amused light in her great blue eyes. "Why, the better part of Atlantis is safe here beneath the sea!"

"Safe here beneath the sea?" I cried, in growing confusion. "Why, how is that possible?"

"That is a long story," she started to explain. "It goes back very far, thousands of years, in fact—"

"And cannot you tell me that story?" I proposed, eagerly. "Cannot you tell me from the beginning? Remember, I am a stranger here and find everything very confusing. What is this Atlantis of yours? And how old is it? And how large? And how did it come to be submerged? And how does it happen that you are living here now beneath the ocean?"

"Whole volumes have been written in answer to those questions," declared Aelios, with a winning smile. "But I'll try to explain everything as best I can." And she paused momentarily, while Stranahan craned his long neck far forward, as if to take in all that she had to say.

"It is perhaps the most romantic tale in history," she resumed, speaking almost with exaltation, while her eyes took on a far-away dreamy look that I thought most becoming, and her upper lip twitched with the same sympathetic quivering I had noted before. "Atlantis is one of the most ancient republics in the world, and at one time was the most populous and powerful of all countries. Our history goes back more than seven thousand years, four thousand above the sea and three thousand beneath—four thousand years of growth, tumult and conquest, and three thousand years of maturity and peace. At a time when Egypt and Babylonia were still unheard of, our engineers reared monuments more massive than the pyramids; and when Babylonia and Egypt were in the full pride of their renown our people regarded them contemptuously as the merest barbarian tribes. Our accomplishments were to them what theirs were to the unclothed blacks of the south; and our country surpassed theirs as a marble palace surpasses a clay hut."

"BUT what was the precise location of your country? And how large was it?" I interposed.

"It was in an isolated position a full day's sailing west of the Pillars of Hercules. As for its size, it was large, and yet not overwhelmingly so; a swift runner might have traveled around it between full moon and full moon. But today you might look vainly for its plains and snow-tipped mountains, for above all but its highest peaks, the unbroken waters foam and toss."

Aelios paused momentarily, and a melancholy reminiscent light came into her eyes, while her long, lithe fingers toyed absently with the folds of her lavender gown.

"Ah, how sad!" I could not forebear murmuring. "What a ghastly tragedy!"

"No, not a tragedy," she quickly denied, regarding me again with a peculiar surprise that I could not understand. "There is no tragedy in the history of Atlantis, though of course there might have been."

"No tragedy?" I cried, wondering vaguely if Aelios could be trying to make sport of me. "Is it not tragedy for a whole great country to be submerged?"

"It may be, or again it may not be," she replied, enigmatically. "In this case, it was not."

Noting my quizzical silence, she continued, with a reassuring smile, "No doubt you will find this difficult to understand. In your world above seas, conditions are perhaps very different from those of old Atlantis. Certainly, you are spared the perils which we faced, and which compelled us to submerge our continent."

"Compelled you to submerge your continent?" I repeated, growing more amazed each instant. "Do you mean to say you submerged it deliberately?"

"Yes. How else?" she returned, in matter-of-fact tones. "The Submergence—or the Deliverance, as it is sometimes called—was the most fortunate event in our history. We celebrate it annually at our great festival, the Festival of the Good Destruction."

Again she paused, as if uncertain how to proceed, while I was forced to join Stranahan in a bewildered silence.

"In order to make things clear," she continued at length, with upper lip still fluttering and eyes that smiled with kindly good will, "I suppose I will have to describe Atlantis as it was in the old days, the days before the flood. Thirty-one hundred years ago, or at the time when the Submergence was first proposed, we were in possession of secrets which the upper world has perhaps not rediscovered even today. I will not speak of our art, literature and philosophy, which, though advanced for their day, were incomparably inferior to what we have since produced; it was in scientific spheres that our progress was most pronounced. From the beginning, our science was a strangely lopsided growth; it was most developed on the purely material side; and while it could tell us how to compute a comet's weight and enabled us to communicate with the people of Mars, still on the whole it was concerned with such practical questions as how to produce food artificially or how to utilize new sources of energy. And in these directions it was amazingly efficient. We had long passed the stage, for example, when we needed to rely upon steam, gasoline or electricity to run our motors or to carry us over the ground or through the air; we had mastered the life-secret of matter itself, and by means of the energy within the atoms could produce power equal to that of a tornado or of a volcanic eruption."

"Marvelous!" I exclaimed, enthusiastically. "Marvelous! What magnificent opportunities that gave you!"

"Yes, that was just the trouble," pursued Aelios, the trace of a frown darkening her lovely cheeks and eyes. "There are some opportunities that no men should have. What would be the gain in giving a wasp the power of a bull? It was not a mere coincidence, for example, that the decline of art was simultaneous with the rise of science. After thousands of years in which the pursuit of the beautiful had been one of the objects of life, men began to be bewildered by the idea of their conquest over matter; they came to apply themselves to the construction of huge and intricate machines, of towering but unsightly piles of masonry, of swift means of locomotion and of unique and elaborate systems of amusement. And at the same time they devoted themselves extensively to destruction. Not to the destruction of their own monstrous contrivances, alas! but to the undermining of human happiness and human life. In our isolated position, we had had comparatively little intercourse for centuries with other lands; but now that we possessed lightning means of travel and lightning weapons of aggression, our citizens began to swoop down occasionally upon a foreign cast, picking a quarrel with the people and finding some excuse for smiting thousands dead. At first, of course, our enemies had no means of retaliation, but it was certain that in the end they would have imitated our methods and singed us with our own fire."

"And is that what actually happened?" I asked, fancying I saw a trace of light at last. "Is that why you had to submerge your land?"

"No, that is not what happened," said Aelios, smiling at my naïveté, while a half-suppressed yawn from Stranahan gave her but little encouragement to continue. "Not all our people were savages, and not all approved of our policy of international murder; nor were all content to see art and beauty trodden down by the twin hoofs of mechanism and multiple production. Of course, the protestants were at first mere voices wailing against the waves, and more than one was jeered as a maniac; but the protest continued and grew through many decades; and though there were thousands that continued to appraise the cities by their size and scientific accomplishment by its deadliness, the time came when the party of rebellion was almost as numerous as the conservatives or 'Respectables,' and when the limitation of mechanical power became an issue that threatened the very life of the State.

"I will not trouble you with the details of that struggle, or with the powerful cause made out by the enemies of Super-Science—for of this you shall hear more later. For the present it is sufficient to state that the climax arrived in the year 56 B. S.——"

"What does B. S. mean?" I interrupted.

"Before the Submergence, of course!" explained Aelios, with a slight frown that instantly made way for a broad and glowing smile.

"It was in the year 56," she proceeded, "that the Agripides ministry came into office. Following the open insurrection of beauty-lovers against the 'Respectables,' the Anti-Mechanism party triumphed in a general election; and Agripides, known by his friends as 'Savior of the World' and by his foes as the 'City-Wrecker,' began to carry out the revolutionary policies he had been advocating for years.

"These policies, which were perhaps the most daring ever conceived by the human mind, contemplated nothing less than the overthrow of existing civilization and the substitution of something better suited to endure. It was Agripides' contention—and a contention established by the researches of the very scientists he opposed—that the State of Atlantis, under current

conditions, had a potential life of not more than five hundred years; that it was burning away its energies with profligate abandon, and would soon droop withering and exhausted into permanent decay. Its best human material was being used up and cast aside like so much straw; its best social energies were being diverted into wasteful and even poisonous channels; its too-rapid scientific progress was imposing a wrenching strain upon the civilized mind and institutions. There was only one remedy, other than the natural one of oblivion and death; and that remedy was in a complete metamorphosis, a change such as the caterpillar undergoes when it enters the chrysalis, a transformation into an environment of such repose that society might have time to recover from its overgrowth and to evolve along quiet and peaceful lines."

ANOTHER half-unconscious yawn from Stranahan imposed a brief interruption at this point; but Aelios had now thoroughly warmed to her theme; and, disregarding Stranahan's rudeness, she continued almost without delay.

"The proposal which Agripides had to make, and which he had been advocating eloquently for years, was one that caused even the liberal-minded to gasp and shake their heads doubtfully. He declared, in a word, that Atlantis was not sufficiently isolated and enisled; that it would never be safe while exposed to the tides of commerce and worldly affairs; that the only rational course was for it first to destroy whatever was noxious within itself, and then to prevent further contamination by walling itself off completely from the rest of the planet. And since no sea however wide and no fortress however strong would be efficacious in warding off the hordes of mankind, the one possible plan would be to go where no men could follow; to seal Atlantis up hermetically in an airtight case—in other words, to sink the whole island to the bottom of the sea!"

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed, horrified at so strange a suggestion. "Sounds just like a lunatic's ravings!"

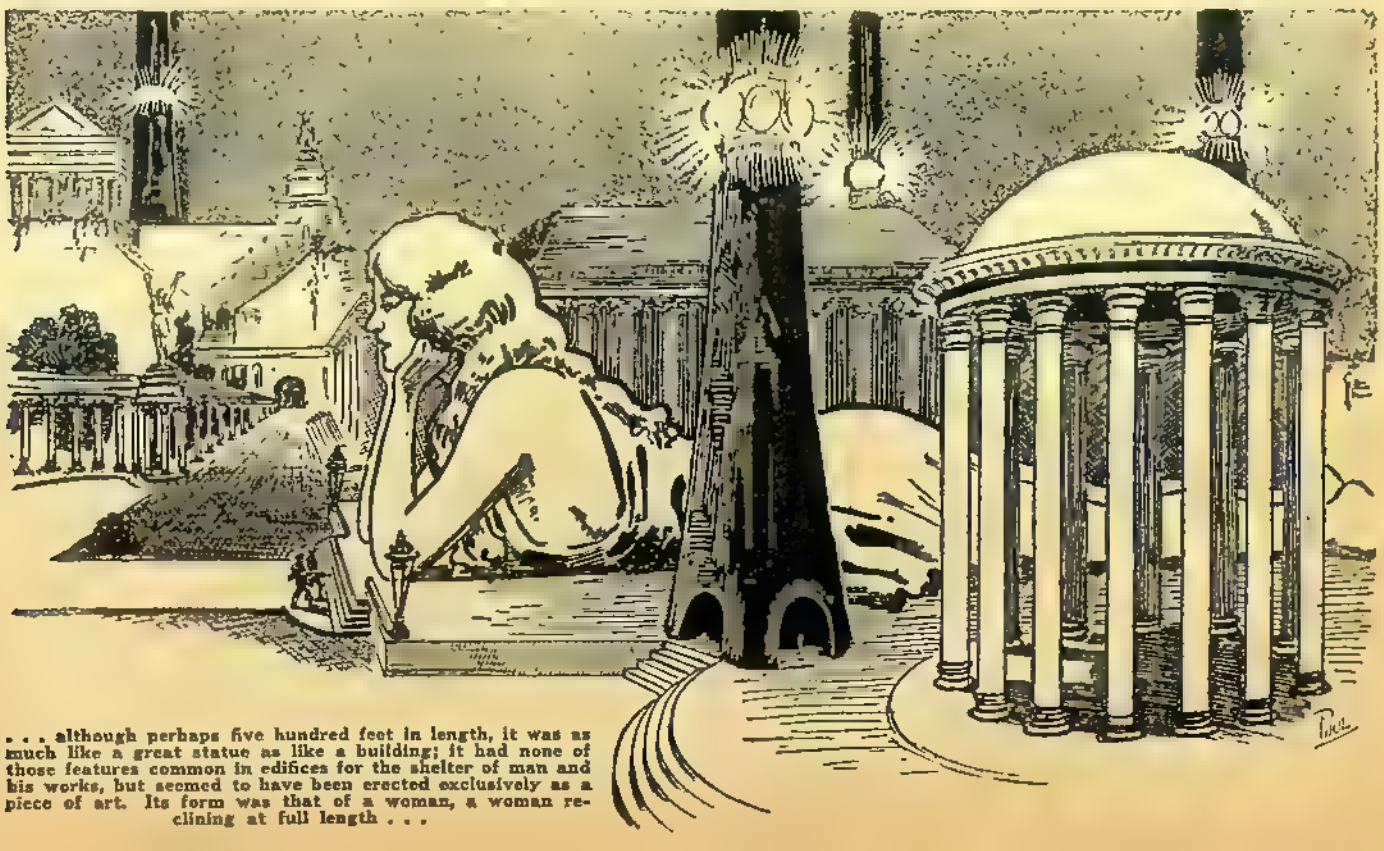
"No, quite the opposite," replied Aelios, with an indulgent smile. "I see you don't understand at all. Agripides was not a lunatic; he was the greatest man that ever lived."

"I thought he must be either a madman or a genius," I returned, dryly.

"Look, I'll show you!" she flung out, almost as a challenge, since I did not seem convinced of her hero's greatness. And rising hurriedly and flitting a dozen paces down the colonnade, she pointed to a life-sized marble bust on a panel between the columns. "See! That is Agripides! Does that look like the face of a lunatic?"

Hastily I had followed Aelios, with Stranahan at my heels; and he joined me in surveying the bust with a show of interest, though his puzzled expression showed that he did not know and much less cared who Agripides may have been. "The glorious saints have mercy on us, if he hasn't a beard like a goat!" was his one and only comment. But I did not deign to reply, and fixed my eyes sternly and appraisingly upon the countenance of Agripides. The hair and beard were perhaps a little long, I thought, unconsciously agreeing with Stranahan; but the features were the most striking I had ever seen in any human being. Like many of the faces which have come down to us from classical times, this countenance combined intellect and beauty to a singular degree. The brow was broad, as in the representations of Homer, but it also rose to a majestic dominance; the eyes were large and alert, the lips thin and compressed, the cheeks long and firmly modelled, while the features were furrowed with deep lines of sympathy that reminded me of Lincoln, and at the same time were marked with a wistful, dreamy expression that contrasted strangely with a savage, almost tigerish determination more implied than clearly graven on the even contours of the face.

"Agripides was a remarkable orator, and at the same time a writer of force," stated Aelios, as we returned to our seats. "Hundreds of his essays and



. . . although perhaps five hundred feet in length, it was as much like a great statue as like a building; it had none of those features common in edifices for the shelter of man and his works, but seemed to have been erected exclusively as a piece of art. Its form was that of a woman, a woman reclining at full length . . .

addresses have been preserved, and they show such brilliance, vehemence, and wit, and at the same time such clarity and logic of presentation, that it is little wonder that he converted all Atlantis to his way of thinking. Or perhaps it would not be fair to say that he converted all Atlantis—there was plenty of wordy opposition to his schemes, as well as several little armed revolts and insurrections that had to be suppressed. But Agripides was not a man to be easily daunted, and in spite of the strenuous objections of the 'Respectables,' the year 49 saw the publication of his complete plans for the Submergence.

"Those plans were more daring than the worst enemies of Agripides could have anticipated. He proposed, in a word, to cover a large part of Atlantis with an enormous glass wall, reaching like an artificial sky, hundreds of feet above ground, and thick enough to withstand the pressure of unthinkable tons of water. Near the base of this wall should be two great valves, one through which the ocean might be admitted into a broad canal or artificial river, and a second (at the opposite end of Atlantis) through which the waters might be forced out again by means of gigantic intra-atomic pumps. I need not mention, of course, that deep wells and distilled sea water would serve for domestic and drinking purposes; that decomposed water would provide sufficient oxygen for breathing; and that artificial sunlight, synthesized chemically so as to produce the life-giving elements of the original, would not only supply illumination but would support vegetation and human life as well.

"Yes, yes, that is all very good," said I, feeling that Aelios had not yet touched upon the most essential fact of all. "But how did Agripides propose to sink the island beneath the sea?"

"That is a difficult question," she murmured, with a smile that was worth more to me than volumes of knowledge. "It involves technical questions of engineering with which, I must confess, I am very poorly acquainted. But, as I understand it, what Agripides proposed was that enormous tanks be buried under the sea bottom far to the west of Atlantis, and that, at a given signal, the water should be raised to boiling point by an application of intra-atomic heat. The resulting tons of steam, in their fury to escape, would create an explosion that would burst the very floor of the sea; in one direction there would be a gigantic upheaval, and a lifting of the ocean bed; and in another direction, by way of reaction, there would be a sinking of the ocean bottom in an effort of the strata not directly affected, to fill in the gap left by those displaced. And while a whole vast area would rise thousands of feet (although not to the level of the water), another area would be forced downward an equal distance; and that area, which would be of enormous extent, would include the island of Atlantis. To use a crude illustration, one may think of a comman plank, balanced on its center, of which one end cannot be tilted upward without causing the other end to slant down; and one may imagine Atlantis as reposing on the lower slope of such a plank."

"BUT that is all mere theory," I pointed out. "Certainly, Agripides wouldn't dare to sink the island merely on the basis of such unproved calculations."

"Oh, no, of course not. The computations were all verified by actual experiment. With the aid of two accomplished engineers, Agripides made a small model of the continent and the surrounding ocean, accurately reproducing every detail; and, having stimulated an explosion under the proper conditions, he found that the miniature island sank precisely as he expected the real island to do."

"Even so," I argued, "would not the explosion have shattered the entire crust of the earth? And would not the great glass dome have been split and ruined even if the ground beneath it remained firm?"

"All that was duly provided for," explained Aelios. "The submergence was to be so gradual as to require several hours; and since the explosion was to occur under the sea rather than under the island itself, it would shatter the crust of the earth only in remote localities, and the shock would not be severe enough to affect the glass wall. In other words—to make another comparison—the island was to be like a ship that sinks in its entirety after striking the reefs, although only the prow is damaged and the rest remains uninjured."

"Yes, I understand perfectly," said I, recalling my recent experiences in the X-111. "But even assuming that the experiment was perfectly safe, how did Agripides ever persuade the people to sink their homes beneath the sea?"

"It was precisely there that he proved his greatness," said Aelios, casting an admiring glance in the direction of Agripides' statue. "Well knowing that imagination is the most powerful force in human life, he began to work upon the imagination of the masses to show the dangers of civilization. Simultaneously with the publication of his plans for the Submergence, he opened to the public an enormous exhibition palace in which he presented the most ghastly display in history. With the vision of the social philosopher and the intuition of the prophet, he had constructed in miniature the Atlantis of the future as he conceived it would be—and no man could gaze upon that Atlantis without heartily praying for the Submergence. The landscape had been blasted, muddied and made black, and scarcely a green leaf could be seen; steel towers and smokestacks dotted the island until it looked like a range of artificial hills; great wheels and chains whirled and rattled in the dark interiors of the buildings, and to each wheel and chain a man was tied; and the huge engines and motors were fed with the blood of men, and watered with their tears. Innumerable multitudes—not only of men but of women, and of sickly, pinch-faced children—were bound as slaves to the machines, and responded to automatic orders that the machines flashed forth; and after they had served long and their limbs were growing frail, they were crushed and mangled by the very masters they had served, or else were cast out to perish like frost-bitten flies. But the great wheels never ceased to turn or the levers to clatter, and their steel jaws gnashed the gouged-out hearts and brains of men, and their dust and cinders clouded the fields and forests, and their poison fumes invaded the lungs of the people, blunting their minds and making them droop and die by the million."

"What a hideous picture!" I cried, with a shudder. "But certainly, certainly it was an exaggeration!"

"No, Agripides had no need to exaggerate. He merely showed the logical advance upon existing advances. But this was the least grewsome of the exhibits. One half of the display, which he entitled 'The Triumph of Science,' was devoted to the supreme horror. Here again he depicted artificial landscapes and many-towered cities; but the wheels of those cities were not revolving, though smoke was indeed in the air. At first sight, they might hardly have been recognized as cities at all; they were really little more than chaotic heaps of iron and stone; many of the buildings had been blasted to fragments, some

had toppled over, others were mere mangled frameworks of steel. Scarcely more than an isolated wall remained standing here and there to show that this had been the home of men; but of the inhabitants themselves there was indeed an occasional sign: here one was futiley gasping for breath, writhing on the ground like a tormented worm; there one was groping crazily through the ruins, with torn breast and blinded eyes; yonder a family group was lying sprawled at all angles, with pale faces convulsed with their last agony.

"But had one looked for the source of the destruction, one would not easily have found it—except that far above, so remote as scarcely to be visible, a fleet of mosquito-like flying craft were buzzing on their way like stealthy marauders."

Aelios paused, a deep seriousness darkening her fair features; and as I sat there regarding her in silence, I could not but reflect what unspeakable distances separated the bloody picture she described from the enchanting scenes among which she dwelt.

"NATURALLY," she continued, "the people were not captivated with the thought of the future depicted by Agripides. And, Agripides, acting at the psychological moment when all Atlantis was most aroused, convened the National Assembly, and polled a majority of—three to one in favor of the Submergence! This majority being confirmed by a referendum of the people, the great leader took immediate steps toward carrying out his revolutionary project.

"Nearly forty-eight years were consumed in the necessary preliminaries, and in that time Atlantis found itself forced halfway toward the realization of Agripides' direct prophecies. The island of Antiles, a small republic located far to westward, had spied out the aggressive schemes of the Atlantean military experts, and enlarging upon them, had manufactured a fleet of poison-bearing aircraft capable of smiting whole cities with death and ruin. That they were aimed for a contemplated conflict with Atlantis there could be not a doubt; that such a conflict could not be averted by diplomacy was too self-evident to require demonstration; and that there was no resisting the destructive airships was generally, although unofficially, admitted. Conceivably, it was the dread of imminent disaster that restrained the minds of the people from vacillating at the last moment and that brought the plans of Agripides to their triumphant issue.

"Agripides, unfortunately, did not survive to see the consummation of his plans. Such a happiness was more than he had hoped for; the years were already heavy upon him when his revolutionary ideas first won approval. But, dying peacefully at an advanced age in the year 15 B. S., he yet lived long enough to supervise the more important details of the project and to be assured of its eventual success.

"In accordance with Agripides' directions, a reinforced glass wall many layers thick was erected over the most picturesque part of Atlantis, for it was agreed that the rest (which included the site of many cities) was not worth saving. I shall not describe the steps taken to insure the health and comfort of the people after the Submergence, to rear elegant palaces and mansions, to duplicate the sunlight and to produce food chemically; I shall not even dwell upon the Good Destruction, except to say that all save the most essential of power-driven tools were piled up in the doomed part of the island, to be buried on the day of the Submergence together with the towers of the deserted cities. But what I must mention—and this is most important—is that not all our people were content to be submerged; that about one-third, irreconcilable to the last, emigrated eastward in a great body a few months before the Submergence. It was this that made us most sad when Agripides' plans were fulfilled and we sank at last to the bottom of the sea."

"Have you ever heard what happened to them?" I inquired, marveling at this extraordinary migration.

"No, how could we? We have never since established communication with the earth. But I was thinking that perhaps you, who are from the upper world, could give us some tidings of our lost fellow men."

"I am not sure but that I can," I replied, slowly, thinking of the ancient Greeks and their striking resemblances to the Atlanteans and wondering whether the immigrants from the sunken island might not have been among the original settlers of Athens and Corinth.

And then, recalling the mystery of the "Telegonus," that powerful lost Homeric epic, I perceived a possible clue. "Tell me," I asked, though the question was apparently irrelevant, "what do you know about Homer?"

"Homer?" she echoed. And then, with the ease of perfect familiarity, "Why, Homer was one of the greatest poets we know of—almost equal to the best that have arisen since the Good Destruction. He lived at about the time of the Submergence in a country far to the East, with which we had trade relations in spite of its half barbarous condition. It was, in a way, a sort of dependency, a ward of Atlantis; and it was from us that its people derived their alphabet as well as much of their language and many of their institutions. Possibly it was there that the Atlantean migrants settled."

"Ah, I see," said I, with a flash of understanding. "Then you mean—"

But before I could utter another word, interruption came from an unexpected quarter. And with a jolt I returned from ancient Atlantis to the realities of my own life. "Hello, boys! Hello! Hello! There they are, there they are!" came in loud familiar tones from our rear, followed by a salvo of cheers; and before Stranahan and I could quite realize what was happening, we felt our hands grasped in a multitude of hands, and found ourselves surrounded by dozens, literally dozens, of well known faces. The first I recognized was that of Captain Gavison, who grinned happily in welcome; then I distinguished one after one the faces of my fellow seamen, apparently all of them, and all of them talking, laughing, crowding about, slapping us on the back, and shouting out greetings in tumultuous chorus.

CHAPTER XIII

Trial and Judgment

TO our disappointment, we received no immediate explanation of the arrival of Captain Gavison and his men. A score of the natives, who stood frowning in the background, appeared disinclined to permit any extended conversation; and it was but a minute before they motioned the newcomers to follow them. I was interested to observe that all, from the Captain down to the humblest recruit, obeyed as readily as though in response to an absolute master, marching not in military formation and yet at a regular pace and with every appearance of discipline.

Having nothing better to do, Stranahan and I trailed in their wake, for at their first appearance Aelios had murmured a hasty "Good-bye" and had gone tripping out of sight around a bend in the colonnade.

In a few minutes we saw our comrades entering a building we well knew—the palace of sapphire and amber. Although expecting to be ordered out, we made bold to follow, and to our surprise passed through the gates of the building and into its gorgeous interior without attracting any noticeable attention. Arriving at the great central theatre, we observed that hundreds of the natives were assembled as though in solemn debate. Many an eye was turned upon the newcomers in curiosity and amazement; but there was no audible murmur at our entrance. And when Captain Gavison and his followers were motioned to seats, Stranahan and I had no hesitation about joining them.

But the unlucky Stranahan was doomed to still further boredom. For nearly an hour he was compelled to listen to a discussion of which he understood scarcely a word. Certainly, he had cause to envy me, for I easily followed the greater part of what was said —and most unusual and absorbing I found it!

The leader of the debate was a broad-browed woman, with a firm and distinguished manner, and more than a trace of beauty in spite of her graying hair. But she spoke comparatively little; and six or eight of the audience took turns in standing in the open space in front and delivering brief addresses. Their theme was not at first apparent to me; I thought that they were perhaps discussing some question of politics, or pleading the merits of some new law; and I was surprised to discover that what they were arguing was no mere practical matter, but concerned the architecture of a new building, to be known as the "Palace of the Ten Arts." One, there was that suggested a lagoon fronting the edifice, a second who recommended rainbow fountains, and a third who favored an arcade of multi-colored crystal; and all the proposals were heard with equal respect and duly noted down by the leader of the debate, who smiled benignantly upon all the speakers and refrained from obtruding her personal preferences.

I was relieved when at length all who desired to speak had had their say. The leader now declared the meeting open for further business; and now it was that a tall young man, whom I recognized as one of the attendants of Captain Gavison and his men, rose quickly to his feet and advanced with a determined air toward the speaker's space. A hush of expectation had come over the gathering; all eyes were fastened upon the tall young man as though he had a message of rare importance.

His first words were to justify this impression. "Fellow citizens," said he, speaking in a deep-toned voice which had something of that musical quality common to his people, "I have to bring to your attention today a matter unique in the history of Atlantis. First, however, let me recall to your minds several facts with which you are no doubt familiar. Two months ago we were astonished to find in our midst two creatures whose sallow complexion, grotesque costume and still more grotesque features, proclaimed them not to be natives of Atlantis. How they had penetrated beneath the secluded dome of our country we could not imagine, but it was decided that the best course would be to educate them in our language, and, after they were thoroughly conversant with the tongue, to question them in the attempt to solve the mystery. This decision was only reinforced by the appearance of two more of the queer creatures a day or so later, and then again by the arrival of a third strange couple. While it was feared that our age-old seclusion had been broken and that we were being invaded by the upper world, still it was decided that for the present the best course would be to maintain an unperturbed but vigilant silence."

The speaker paused, and cleared his throat as though the important part of his address were to follow. "Only yesterday, fellow citizens," he continued, "you heard the startling sequel. A field naturalist, roaming along the Salty River in the wilderness beyond the furthest colonnades, made the most surprising discovery of his life—a peculiar ugly rod-like ship of unknown type, a ship that seemed to be fairly swarming with uncouth humans! Naturally, the scientist was alarmed; and, having made his escape, he hastened back to the city to secure aid in capturing the aliens. As he described them, they were in every respect like the barbarians of which ancient annals tell,—great, brawny humans of unkempt and ferocious appearance. But we knew that they could be no more redoubtable than their kindred who were already among us; we knew that they would be easily subdued by the superior minds and irresistible magnetic wills with which nature and a select inheritance have endowed our race. And when the twenty men of the searching expedition set out early this morning, we had reason to believe that the aliens would be present by evening to face trial before this assemblage.

"As you observe, we have not been disappointed. But now, fellow citizens, the great problem arises. The prisoners appear to be unclean as well as wanton and unprincipled men. Contrary to all regulations, they have been catching fish from the Salty River and using them for food. They have been slaying unoffending crabs and turtles, and—disgusting though the idea be—frying and eating them! They have been polluting water of the stream; they have been trampling down the rarest seaweeds, and beating to death the daintiest of water-flowers; they have been scrawling all sorts of crude and outlandish designs on the delicate pink and blue of the roof-bearing columns.

"But all this—criminal though it be—we may overlook for the moment. The chief problem presented by the arrival of these aliens is of such wide-reaching social consequence that their minor transgressions pale into insignificance. For the first time in more than three thousand years, the principles of Agripides have been violated. Visitors from outside have at last appeared; at last we are in danger of contamination by the passions and vices of the upper world. Whether the invasion was deliberate is not definitely known, but how it was made is sufficiently clear: the barbarian ship, which was equipped to travel under the sea, was sucked into the whirlpool at the ocean entrance of Atlantis and forced into the valve through which the waters of the Salty River find admittance. Of course, this trespass may have been merely accidental; but remembering the warlike and unfriendly ways of the upper world, I personally suspect that the intrusion was planned with cunning design, and that other invading craft—possibly a whole invading fleet—may be expected to arrive. Fellow citizens, what is your opinion?"

AMID general silence the speaker took his seat—applause was apparently unknown among the Atlanteans. But this fact did not then enter into my thoughts; I was too much enraged at the tall young man's misstatements. With a lack of self-consciousness that I can explain only by my blinding fury, I found myself doing the unprecedented.

Springing excitedly to my feet, I demanded, hotly, in the native tongue, "Friends, may I say a word?"

Instantly hundreds of pairs of eyes were turned upon me in surprise; I saw that I had no more been

expected to speak than if I had been a tree or a stone. But the glances that were darted at me were not unfriendly, and as yet I was too much incensed to regret my words.

"Certainly, you may say all you wish," rang out the clear, well-rounded tones of the lady leader of the debate. "This is the Hall of Public Enlightenment, you know, and any person with anything to say will gladly be heard."

"Go on, old sport, give it to them good!" whispered Stranahan into my ear, although he could not have caught the drift of what was happening; and, with his words rankling in my mind, I started toward the speaker's space.

But as I took my place before that silent, staring multitude, I wished that I could have been safely back in my seat. Something suspiciously like fear overcame me—what right had I to be addressing this strange assemblage? What reason to expect that I could speak their language intelligibly? Yet necessity prodded me on; and, after gaping stonily at the spectators, I found myself somehow uttering a series of more or less connected sounds. I did not say what I had intended, and I suspect that more than one English word got itself intertwined with my Atlantean vocabulary; but I was encouraged when I observed that all eyes were fixed upon me with apparent interest, and that no one openly laughed or so much as tittered, though one or two (and among them Stranahan) could hardly suppress a smile.

After a vague, sputtering introduction that I cannot begin to recall, I found myself on fairly solid ground. I declared that I could answer many of the questions which the previous speaker had put; I explained that my companions and myself were not babarians, being representatives of the highest of modern civilizations; I stated that we had no evil intentions, having come to Atlantis by accident, and certainly not being the forerunners of a wave of invasion; and, at the same time, I offered our thanks for the treatment already accorded us, and expressed our intention to abide by the laws of Atlantis and to act in conformity with the best traditions of the land.

As I took my seat, I could see from the faces of my hearers that I had produced a favorable effect. Many were the nods of approval that greeted me, and many the sympathetic smiles. But at the same time I could perceive that I had not made myself perfectly clear; and when a score of voices simultaneously requested that I return to the platform, I had no other choice.

Questions regarding my native land were now rained upon me in profusion. But whether because of my limited knowledge of the language or because the experience of the Atlanteans differed so fundamentally from my own, I had great difficulty in making myself understood. My description of the growth and attainments of the modern world was listened to with interest, but with a lack of comprehension that I thought almost idiotic. Thus, when I declared that the United States was a leading nation because of its population of a hundred million, its rare inventions and its prolific manufactures, my hearers merely looked blank and asked how the country ranked in art; and when I stated (what surely is self-evident to all patriotic Americans) that New York is the greatest city on earth because of its tall buildings and its capacity for housing a million human beings in one square mile, my audience regarded me with something akin to horror, and one of the men evidently a dolt, for he seemed quite serious—asked whether no steps had even been taken to abolish the evil.

But it was when describing my own career that I was most grievously misunderstood. Had I confessed to murder, the people could not have been more shocked than when I mentioned that I was one of the crew of a ship commissioned to ram and destroy other ships; and I felt that my prestige was ruined beyond repair when I stated that I had entered the war voluntarily. Even the most friendly hearers seemed to draw unconsciously away from me after my recital; loathing and disgust showed plainly in their faces, as though I had announced myself to be an African cannibal or a Polynesian head hunter. Only too plainly I perceived that what was termed heroism among my fellows was here regarded as villainy. It did little good to explain that war was a cherished custom in the upper world, and that patriotism was among the prime virtues; it was useless to plead that there might be reasons for taking the lives of men, whom one had never seen, and that such reasons were generally recognized among civilized nations. The more I argued, the greater the abhorrence I aroused; and beyond an occasional murmured "Agripides was right," my words brought little direct reply. And at length I returned to my seat feeling myself to be in disgrace, yet curbing my embarrassment by inwardly cursing the stupidity of the Atlanteans.

The remaining business of the assemblage was disposed of quickly enough. Following my retreat, the tall young man again addressed the meeting, reminding his audience that they had not yet passed judgment upon us. "Fellow citizens," said he, in conclusion, "I have a proposal to make, which, so far as I can see, is the only one possible under the circumstances. Whether we like it or not, we must recognize that the intruders are here; and, though we did not will their presence, we must treat them humanely. Since we cannot dispose of them by violence and since we must accept their assurance that no others of their kind are to follow, we must let them remain, and see that they are educated and put to work like all other citizens. But one thing we must insist upon above all else: the isolation of Atlantis must be protected, and the countries above seas must never learn of our existence. Hence we must decree that, no matter how many years go by, none of the aliens shall ever return to the upper world!"

And it was with a sinking heart, with the hopelessness of one being sentenced to life imprisonment, that I heard the assemblage endorse this recommendation.

CHAPTER XIV

The Upper World Club

DURING the next few hours, Captain Gavison and the new-found members of his crew were all provided with the native garb and lodged in sumptuous quarters in various parts of the city. They looked peculiar indeed in their new costumes of light blue and green and yellow, and grumbled not a little at the change; but they confessed to their relief at having left the X-111; and not even the prospect of passing their remaining days in Atlantis sufficed to neutralize their joy.

As nearly as I could determine, they had had an altogether wretched time during the past few weeks. A spirit of panic had grown among them, following the failure of Rawson and myself to return from our searching expedition, and neither by bribe nor by threat could any other member of the crew be induced to venture into that wilderness where we had disap-

Half a dozen of the queerest beings we had ever seen came crowding into our path . . . from the blank amazed stares with which they greeted us, it was evident that our appearance was as much a surprise to them as theirs was to us But from a certain steenness and resolution which invested their faces following the first speechless astonishment, we concluded that they had probably seen others of our kind, and were not disposed to treat us leniently.

peared. And so they had all remained anxiously in the vicinity of the disabled ship, drinking the distilled water of the Salty River and snatching what food they could from the land while exhausting their vessel's reserve supplies. How long they could have held out it was impossible to say, but certainly they could not have held out long; madness had been overtaking them with the delay and the suspense; and, but for the timely arrival of the natives, bloody disaster might have ensued.

Yet, while they realized that they had been rescued from possible destruction, I must not give the impression that they were altogether contented with their new surroundings, or that their queer native garments constituted their only source of complaint. Being normal human beings, they found abundant cause for dissatisfaction. And, indeed, they were not much to blame, for how could they adapt themselves immediately to an environment so unfamiliar as that of Atlantis? For some time they walked about like men in a daze; or, rather, like men who know they are dreaming and expect shortly to awaken; and they stared with incredulous eyes at the marble columns of the Sunken World, its sculpture-lined thoroughfares and statuesque palaces. And what wonder if they were dazzled and yet a little frightened by this beauty, which seemed to them so cold and alien a thing? What wonder if the more superstitious shuddered a little at times, and muttered to themselves in the presence of what they took to be the supernatural? What wonder if they missed the familiar things of the earth, the scenes and the faces they had left behind them, the habits they had discarded and the remembered life that was dwindling to a shadow?

Fortunately, they were not always free to brood over their misfortunes. Like those of their shipmates who had preceded them to Archeon, they were at once supplied with tutors who sought to teach them the Atlantean tongue. Each of them received at least two hours a day of personal instruction, and each was required to devote several hours to various prescribed written exercises. It need hardly be stated that not all of them took kindly to this enforced application, for most of them were anything but studious by nature; but the tutors persisted even though their task was a hard one, and prevailed by means of that magnetic dominance I had often noted in the Atlanteans; and all of the crew, from the grizzled McCrae to the callow young Barnfield, were soon plodding regularly over their lessons in grammar and spelling.

But among a group of nearly forty men, it was but natural that some should make more willing and able students than others. And so, while the more backward were still struggling with the elements of Atlantean, others were striding toward a speaking knowledge. Among the latter was Captain Gavison, who still had a position to maintain, and could not let himself be outdone by his men. Whether because of a natural aptitude or of diligent application, he speedily outdistanced all his crew, with the exception (I must modestly admit) of one whose pre-war specialty had been Greek. And partly on account of his evident supremacy in Atlantean, but more largely owing to the force of ironclad habit, he was still the acknowledged leader of us all; and his word still was like the word of a king, his approval still a favor to be courted and his anger a thing to make one quail, although his commission from the United States Navy Department, could hardly give him any authority here in Atlantis.

I do not know whether it was at Captain Gavison's prompting, or whether it was at the suggestion of one of the men, that we took the step which was to band us more closely together. At all events, the step was inevitable; for all of us felt like kinsmen isolated among strangers, and our common experiences and common origin constituted an irresistible bond.

And so it was that we found ourselves convening one afternoon—the whole thirty-nine of us—in a little colonnaded court in one of the city parks. All of us were waiting in vociferous expectancy, for it had been whispered that important events were in store; and so we listened eagerly when Captain Gavison arrived, and took the center of the stage, launching at once into an address.

"The proposal has been made," he announced, beginning without formality, "that we all join forces by forming a social club. We're all in the same boat still, you see, even though we're out of the X-111. Most of us feel rather out of place down here in Atlantis; we find the people strange, the land stranger still, and the customs strangest of all. And so the best way will be to stick together and try to make things agreeable for one another . . ." And in this vein he continued for five or ten minutes, pointing out the advantages of union, the increased power as well as the social gain, the possibility of making our will felt in Atlantis if we acted in concert.

WHEN he had finished, he asked for opinions—and received them in abundance. . . .

"If we got together and started a club," summarized Stangale, whose views coincided with the majority, "things might begin to look a little less dead. Seems to me every day down here is Sunday!"

"Sure, and they've got lots of Sunday closing laws, too!" Stranahan contributed, with a wry grimace toward the massive columns and tinted statuary.

Very tactfully Captain Gavison reminded Stranahan that the question to be decided did not concern the Sunday regulations of the Atlanteans. And without further dalliance he raised his voice and inquired how many were in favor of a social club.

The proposal having been accepted by unanimous acclaim, the next question was one of nomenclature. Various names were suggested: "The Woodrow Wilson Club," "The Theodore Roosevelt Club," "The U. S. A. Club," "The X-111 Club," "The Underseas Association"—but finally, after much pointless debating, we decided that, since we were the sole representatives of the upper world in Atlantis, the most appropriate title would be "The Upper World Club."

Having threshed out this important matter, we now felt it necessary to elect the officers of "The Upper World Club."

Obviously, there was only one possible nominee for President. It seemed almost a matter of form to propose the name of Gavison; and once this name had been mentioned, the election was settled, for there was no one daring enough to run in opposition or even to think of suggesting another candidate.

After being duly installed in office, the Captain made his inaugural address. It was brief and to the point. He began by thanking us in conventional terms for the honor and by assuring us that he would try to run the club as well as if it were a ship under his command. And he concluded with a declaration of policy: "We're all of us caught like rats in a trap, you know, so while we're here there's nothing to do but to try to make the best of our prison. And I think the Upper World Club should be the means. It should have, I believe, the following objects: first, to bring us together for social purposes. Secondly, it should give us the chance to discuss our problems in

this strange world, and should be the means of expressing our combined views to the Atlanteans. Lastly, it should keep us all together, so that we can act in unison if the time ever comes to make a dash for liberty."

"That time will never come!" I surprised myself by exclaiming, after Gavison had lapsed into silence. And, finding all eyes bent upon me inquiringly, I felt bound to continue.

"Let us not deceive ourselves by the thought of escape," I proceeded, stepping toward the center of the assemblage. "We are buried beneath thousands of feet of water, and for all practical purposes America is as far from us as the moon. Even if there were a way back, what good would that do us when we cannot even leave this city against the will of the Atlanteans? No, my friends, let us look facts in the face. We shall remain here till we are gray and toothless, and shall never see the United States again. And let us try to reconcile ourselves to that certainty. Let us try to become citizens of Atlantis, and share in the life about us . . ."

And in this vein I continued for some minutes, while my hearers followed me with transparent interest, and reluctantly nodded agreement.

In general, my words may have been without effect; but they had at least one result I had not anticipated. For when, a few moments later, Gavison announced that nominations were in order for Vice-President, I was surprised to find that my name was the first put forward, and that no others were put forward at all—so that I was selected without opposition.

After I had duly thanked my fellow club members for this honor, the President turned to me, and said, "Harkness, I appoint you a committee of one to confer with me in drawing up the constitution of the Upper World Club." And with that the meeting adjourned.

And thus began my intimacy with Captain Gavison. I do not know how seriously he took the Upper World Club and its constitution, for at most times his grim, firm face was inscrutable; but he acted as if he took it seriously indeed, and he and I spent hours together debating and planning for the club, almost as though we had had to draw up a pact not for thirty-nine individuals but for thirty-nine sovereign states.

How much the club profited from our activities shall always be a question in my mind; but I am certain that I personally profited a great deal, and make bold to believe that even Gavison was not without benefit. Although he had a habit of shutting his thin lips stoically and glaring upon the world with stern, impassive air, an occasional look of weariness and even of melancholy in his keen gray eyes told me that he too was suffering from loneliness; and while he would have been the last man in the world to make such an admission openly, he made it tacitly by the amount of time he spent in my company, theoretically drawing up the constitution of the Upper World Club. He was always far from loquacious; frequently he was taciturn indeed, and would simply sit before me with a detached and meditative air, occasionally grunting some comment or question in response to my remarks. Perhaps the consciousness of the former gulf between us would not leave him; but all the while I felt that we were drawing together, were even beginning to look upon one another with a genuine, although undemonstrative regard. Certainly, he was emerging by degrees from the thick shell of his reticence, as I was emerging from mine. We began quite naturally by a discussion of Atlantis and the Atlanteans; and gradually we ventured into more personal subjects. There came a day when I went so far as to tell him of my former life, my training in ancient Greek, my betrothal to Alma Huntley; and, responsive to my confidence, he offered me one or two glimpses into his own past, and made himself appear more human than ever before, by stating that he had a wife and two little daughters in New York, who no doubt were even now mourning him as lost.

"You know, Harkness, that's the hardest thing of all to bear," he said, while his thin fingers stroked his bristly chin ruminatingly, and the drawn lines of his gaunt face enhanced his habitual gravity. "If there were only some way of getting word to them, it wouldn't be so bad. But I might be dead for all they know—and would you believe it, Harkness, sometimes it seems to me as if I'm actually in my tomb." And the Captain averted his gaze, and after staring into vacancy for an indeterminate period, he continued, speaking more rapidly, and almost with brusqueness, "Now you see why I'm so anxious to get back! For my own part, it wouldn't matter so much, but I can't help thinking it must be Hell for those waiting up there!" And he concluded by drawing vivid pictures of blue-eyed Martha, his wife, and of the auburn-haired six-year-old Ellen, who was waiting for the father that would never come back.

To all this I listened earnestly; and when Gavison had finished, I tried to say whatever I could by way of consolation. And in order to make his woes seem less by comparison, I exaggerated my own; I discoursed upon the misfortune of being sundered from my old father and mother (who, as a matter of fact, had previously been sundered from me by death), and dilated upon my grief at losing Alma Huntley—although, to tell the truth, she had been almost driven out of my thoughts by the proximity of one even fairer than she.

It was from the time of our mutual confessions that my real friendship with Gavison dated. Not unnaturally, we now lost sight of our former positions as superior officer and subordinate, and began to act unrestrainedly toward one another as man to man. And while I was on terms of fellowship with all the crew and intimate with several, my attachment to Gavison became the closest of all; and often of an afternoon, when he had completed the day's studies, or of an evening before the great golden orbs had been extinguished, we might have been seen strolling together along the winding colonnades, or seated on seaweed cushions in a marble hall, discussing the art or the odd ways of Atlantis, practicing the Atlantean speech, exchanging reminiscences of the world we had left, or merely absorbed in one of those long silences that marked our queer acquaintanceship.

CHAPTER XV

The Pageant of the Good Destruction

WHILE my intimacy with Captain Gavison was ripening, I had of course not forgotten one whose friendship meant more to me than that of any man. In the exhilarating moments of that first happy interview with Aelios, I had had visions of speaking with her often, visions of an Atlantis made bright by her very presence. But before long I began to feel that I had been too sanguine. Although I still caught glimpses of her when she came to give Stranahan his daily lesson, and although she would sometimes nod ingratiatingly to me, it was long before I had another opportunity to speak to her, since I could not detach her from the company of the other tutors. And so day after long uneasy day dragged by until they had piled up into a week, and slow, pro-

tracted weeks until they had accumulated into a month, before at last we had another conversation.

Then came a day when I observed her by chance in one of the great festooned courts at the base of a towering campanile. She saw me even before I saw her; and approaching of her own volition, she flashed upon me a smile that seemed to make the universe stand still with joy. "I am glad to see you, my friend," she said, simply and with unaffected kindliness. "I have been wanting to tell you about our coming pageant. I know you will not want to miss it, for it will explain many things you have been wondering about."

"What pageant do you mean?" I asked.

"The Festival of the Good Destruction," she explained. "Every year, as I believe I've told you, we hold a celebration on the anniversary of the Submergence. This year it will take the form of a pageant. It will be the Three Thousand and Thirty-fifth anniversary."

"In eight days. It will commence at noon in the Agripides Theatre, which you will very easily find, since it is in the center of town. I certainly hope to see you there."

"I certainly hope to see you there," I declared, quite truthfully. But at the same time a shadow crossed my thoughts. Hesitatingly, and possibly blushing in my embarrassment, I had to confess that, after all, I would not be able to go.

"Not be able to go?" she demanded, in manifest disappointment. "What other engagement can you possibly have?"

Since some definite excuse appeared to be necessary, I explained—very reluctantly to be sure—that I could not pay my admission.

"Pay your admission?" echoed Aelios, in such shrill surprise that I thought she had misunderstood me. "What on earth are you thinking of? Do you imagine we are barbarians?"

"I'm afraid I haven't made myself clear," I hastened to explain. "Where I come from it is customary to pay upon going to a theatre."

"Really?" demanded Aelios, so incredulously that I thought her most naïve.

"Of course!" I assured her, in such a manner as to stamp all doubt from her mind.

"How queer!" she exclaimed. "How very queer!" Still, I do remember hearing that people used to have to pay for everything before the Submergence. But that was so long ago, I thought the world had outgrown such crudity."

"I don't see anything wrong about paying for what you get," I stated, thinking this the most topsy turvy land in the world. "Don't they really charge you for going to theatres down here?"

"Of course not! How could any one be so gross? Fancy being charged for beauty or ecstasy or dreams! Why, one would as soon think of paying for the air one breathes or the light that shines upon one! The State naturally recognizes the theatre as the birthright of every citizen, just as it recognizes poetry and music and education. We all take part in giving the performances, and of course every one is invited."

"And do you yourself take part?" I queried, my personal interest in Aelios overshadowing my general interest in the native customs.

"Oh, yes, I try to do my share," she acknowledged, with a faint blush that seemed only to accentuate her beauty. "I sometimes lead in the dances."

"And a most exquisite dancer you make!" said I, recalling my first enchanting glimpse of Aelios on the colonnade outside the city.

But before I had had time for further compliments, she had whispered a light "Good-bye," and had gone tripping toward the further end of the court and out of sight through a little half concealed door at the base of the campanile.

IT hardly need be stated that I waited eagerly for the day of the Pageant. Not that I was looking forward to the entertainment itself; I remembered only that Aelios had seen fit to invite me, and that I should be able to see her again. So utterly out of my head was I that her bright face now appeared to me at all times of the day and night; her least smile, her slightest gesture, her most careless nod, was re-enacted a thousand times in my memory. And what if somewhere in the past there had been an Alma Huntley whom I had admired and fancied I had loved?—she was now no more than a ghost amid the shadows of a vanished world.

Certainly, I had no thought of Alma when at last the day of the pageant arrived. I was jubilant merely at the prospect of speaking with Aelios again; I could hardly restrain my impatience, but left for the festivities a full hour earlier than necessary. Such was my eagerness that I could not even walk at a normal pace, but unconsciously hastened my steps as when, in my native land, I had feared to miss a street car or be too late for an appointment with Alma.

But the day's pleasure was to be unexpectedly varied. As I hastened through the streets, striding more rapidly than ever before in this land of leisure, I heard a well known voice shouting behind me, "Hey, wait a minute! Where are you going so fast?"

With a sinking heart I wheeled about—to face the grinning Stranahan.

"Great Jerusalem, you were racing so I could hardly catch up!" he panted, as he joined me. "Where you bound for, anyway?"

"Where are you bound for?" I countered.

"To the pageant, of course," he informed me. And, amiably unconscious that he might be interfering with my plans, he suggested, "Well, we both seem to be going in the same direction, so what do you say to going together?"

"Yes, let's go together," I had to acquiesce; and so it happened that Stranahan and I reached the Agripides Theatre arm in arm.

As I might have known, we were much too early; the doors were open, but the audience had scarcely begun to arrive. Indeed, the whole enormous open-air theatre was occupied only by a few children who danced and played about the stage and romped from tier to tier of the seaweed-cushioned marble seats.

Upon entering, we paused for a view of the giant theatre, which seemed large enough to accommodate an entire community, and which was constructed with a simple and yet majestic art that I thought admirable. The seat arrangement was that of the typical Greek theatre, but the stage surprised me, not only by its size but by its general appearance, for it was not less than two or three acres in extent, and was completely enclosed by a ring of columns bearing a dome apparently inlaid with ebony and gold. But what particularly caught my attention was an object which was evidently not an integral part of the building—an amorphous mass many feet in height and covering more than half of the stage, but completely mantled in a linen-like white cloth that was like a garment of mystery.

But Stranahan would brook not more than a moment's pause for viewing the building. Impetuously he

started down the steeply sloping central aisle, and did not halt until he had reached the front row, where he appropriated the best seat as nonchalantly as though it had been reserved for him. Of course, I had no choice except to deposit myself at his side; but I could not help wishing that he had chosen a less conspicuous position.

It was not long before the theatre began to fill. Singly and in whole family groups the people were arriving, children and gray old men and bright-faced girls and youths; and all wore happy, expectant smiles, and all were clad in their pastel-tinted gowns that made them look like animated flowers. I had a chance now to observe the Atlanteans as never before; and, as never before, I was struck by the exceptional number of well formed and beautiful faces; by the fact that every one seemed tranquil and contented, and that there was little if any sign of tragedy or sorrow. Here was no evidence of the worn and withered, the distorted, the grotesque, the wolfish, the weasel and the bovine types so common on earth; even the old seemed to wear a sweet and placid and at times a beautiful look, which contrasted strangely with the sour and crochety expression I had regarded as natural; and most of the faces bore the imprint of something akin to poetry and music, an exalted something that I had first noted in Aelios and that set the Atlanteans apart from every other race I had ever known.

Even to be among these people seemed to produce a strange and uplifting effect upon me. I do not know what mysterious psychic currents were at work, and I cannot say that my imagination did not betray me; but I do distinctly remember that, as the theatre gradually filled, a singular sense of well-being and almost of thankfulness came upon me, a feeling of spiritual tranquility and repose, as though by some subtle transference of thought I had shared the mood of the multitude and become one with them in heart. Even Stranahan seemed to have been affected, for he had none of his usual boisterousness; he talked but little, and there was a rapt and almost devout look in his eyes, as though he too had caught the glimmer of some rare loveliness.

Yet there was still a shadow across my happiness—and possibly across his as well. As I scanned the faces that thronged down the aisles and along the tiers of seats, there was one smiling countenance for which I searched in vain. Surely, Aelios had not forgotten the day, nor had she forgotten her implied promise to see me here; yet till the last seat was filled by the expectant crowd, I scrutinized the faces of the newcomers, only to be assured that Aelios was not among them.

But after about an hour, my thoughts were forcibly recalled from Aelios to the spectacle in the great theatre. A sudden flickering of the great golden orbs attracted our attention; and we noted that those luminaries were being dimmed as though by unseen hands until they had less than half their usual brightness. At the same time, long shafts of light began to shoot out simultaneously from all points of the horizon,—multicolored shafts that included all the hues of the rainbow. In wide ambling curves they met the dark glass of the roof, splashing it with red and purple, orange and green, lavender and violet; and for many minutes the play and interplay of color continued, the searchlights seeming to work out all manner of patterns and arabesques which endured for a moment and vanished.

THE one thing to which I could liken this pageant of light was the music that sometimes preceded theatrical performances in our own land. The flashing colors had all the ethereal loveliness of music; and like music they prepared one for a mood of rapture and contemplation. And when at length the original lights had faded out, to be replaced by others that shone directly down upon the open platform or stage, this mood was strengthened and intensified; and at the same time I felt that we had but beheld an introduction to the real exhibition.

Suddenly, in the illumination of the many-hued searchlights, a white-gowned woman appeared upon the stage. She was very young, scarcely more than a girl, I thought, and her face had something of that sweetness and radiance which distinguished Aelios; while in the colored glow of the everchanging lights she seemed some shimmering, ethereal thing, possibly a butterfly, possibly some apparition as unreal as rainbows or moonlit cloud.

I was surprised, accordingly, when the fairy-like creature began to speak. Or perhaps it would not be correct to say that she spoke; her words came in a soft, wonderfully melodious voice more than half like song; and merely to listen to her was to be lulled and soothed as though by music.

Yet, despite the spirit of exaltation and almost of worship she aroused in me, I did not miss the drift of what she was saying.

"Fellow citizens," she declared, while a hush came over the assemblage, and all strained forward so as to lose not a syllable, "fellow citizens, for this year's celebration we have decided to present a historical pageant. Imagine yourselves borne backward almost thirty-one hundred years, to those days when the Submergence was not yet an accomplished fact, and Agripides stood before the old National Assembly urging the Good Destruction. Agripides shall now appear before you, as he appeared to your forefathers in the lands above the sea; you shall be the National Assembly before which he speaks; and he shall present his views to you as he presented them to our ancestors, and depict for you, as he depicted for them, the reasons why Atlantis should become a sunken continent. Behold, here comes Agripides!"

With a wide-sweeping bow the speaker ceased, retreating from view through some unseen door; and at the same instant some invisible instrument sent forth a sound like a trumpet blast, and from the rear of the stage a tall figure appeared, walking slowly and with head bent low as though in thought.

"Agripides! Agripides!" came one or two indistinct murmurs from behind me, but there was no such tumult of applause as I might have expected. Yet all eyes were directed eagerly toward the newcomer, and I found myself a partner in the tense excitement of the multitude.

Even had I not heard the name Agripides, I should have recognized the advancing figure from the bust shown me by Aelios—there was the same bearded countenance, the same broad and noble brow, the same furrowed and sympathetic features. But one characteristic there was which the bust could not show, and which, while merely incidental, struck me with peculiar force. The garments of Agripides were not gay-hued, like those of modern Atlanteans, but were of a deep and somber brown; and they clung to his body so closely as apparently to interfere with his walking, and to make him look disquietingly like an animated corpse.

But I forgot all such irrevelant impressions the moment that Agripides—or, rather, his living representative—had uttered his first word. "Fellow members of the National Assembly," said he, with a low bow,

while in the audience an awed silence held sway, "for the hundredth time I address you on the subject of the proposed Submergence. And for the hundredth time I remind you that we have no choice in the matter: it is a question of the submergence either of the land of Atlantis or of its soul. Let me prove this to you, Members of the Assembly; let me show you how near the soul of Atlantis already is to submergence. Watch carefully as a stream of typical present-day men and women passes by."

The speaker ceased, and from invisible corridors on both sides of the stage came a noise as of shuffled feet, chattering voices, horns and bells and clattering wheels. "By the Holy Father, if we're not back in the old U. S. A.!" muttered Stranahan so loud that many of the audience could hear him; and he leaned so far forward that I feared he would fall over the railing into the stage.

But the spectacle before us was so engrossing as to make me forget even Stranahan's absurd conduct. Very quickly I came to agree that Atlantis before the Submergence must indeed have been hideous; I had never known anything quite so ugly as the scene we now witnessed. From both sides of the stage a slow procession of men and women began to file, the two streams passing each other and trailing out in opposite directions; and the faces and figures of the people were the most repulsive I had ever seen. Some were so lean and scrawny as to remind me of walking skeletons; others, fat and bloated, waddled along like living caricatures with scarcely the power of self-locomotion; and the majority had an unnaturally sallow, flushed or mottled complexion that seemed to set them off as a species apart. And their clothes were in accord with their appearance; they were all clad in a drab brown or black, some with a peculiar steely color that encircled their chins and ears, some with strange metallic waist-bands that prevented them from turning in any direction, some with ornamental brass spikes that elevated the soles of their feet inches above their heels and converted their walking into a form of hobbling.

But what chiefly interested me were the faces of the people. Not a few, with heavy paunches, and baggy, feeble cheeks, reminded me of nothing so much as of a certain bristly domestic beast; not a few others had features grotesquely like those of baboons, bears, wolves, foxes, weasles, or tigers. And a majority looked like nothing so much as the prey of tigers, weasels, and foxes. Their eyes had a hunted expression, and their whole manner was one of timidity; they seemed continually confused and frightened and ready to run at any sound, and yet had something of the cowed look of creatures beaten into resigned despair.

All the while, as they proceeded across the stage, they produced a perfect pandemonium of squeaks, grunts, hoots, rumblings, howlings, and snarlings, some seeming quite familiar to me, others sounding like voices of the wilderness. The acting, I thought, was marvelous; it was executed so perfectly that for the time I had quite forgotten it was acting at all. Hearing the uproar and looking at the dark-robed, distorted multitude, I could not but think by contrast of Aelios and the grace and beauty that surrounded her; and I missed her even more keenly than before, and wondered impatiently if I should not yet see her at the pageant.

At length, to my relief, the last of the uncouth mob had gone trooping off the stage, and only the tall figure of Agripides remained. "Members of the Assembly," resumed the statesman, after all had again become quiet, "you have now had a close view of our typical citizens. Do you not believe them more deeply submerged than if a thousand fathoms of water rolled above them? Or if you are not yet convinced, let me show you these people in their normal occupations."

As though at a prearranged signal, three or four huge instruments, with long segmented oblong belts moving on wheels, were dragged to the center of the stage by half-invisible wires. I recognized these machines as curious forms of treadmills, for on each of the belts a man had been deposited, and each man was forcing his legs back and forth at tremendous speed, as though running in a desperate hurry. But no matter how furiously they worked, all the men remained in exactly the same place, for the belts slid backward precisely as fast as their feet pressed forward.

"Saints in heaven," opined Stranahan, with a puzzled frown, "they'd get there just as fast if they took their time!"

After a minute or two the treadmills were pulled off the stage and Agripides again briefly addressed the audience. "My friends," said he, "I will now illustrate for you another of the leading occupations of our times."

I DO not know what rare art of stagecraft was then applied, for as if by magic a bright bed of flowers sprang to life before us, and long-stemmed purple and yellow blossoms resembling tulips and hollyhocks waved above some retiring white-budding plant reminding me of the violet. But I was to be disappointed if I expected anything beautiful to follow. From one side of the stage came a series of oaths, growls, curses, shrieks, hisses, and mutterings, gradually increasing in fierceness and volume; and soon an amorphous mass of squirming, twisting, embattled men writhed into view. I could not tell how many of them there were, except that they were numbered by the dozen; and I could not determine what they looked like, except that they were all soberly attired. But it was as if a storm had been let loose among them; they were literally tumbling over one another, wrestling with the ferocity of lions, snatching violently at one another's arms, legs and necks, until they seemed little more than a blur of convulsive, wildly agitated trunks and limbs.

"Holy Methuselah, it's a new kind of football!" cried Stranahan, excitedly, as he craned his long neck far forward for a better view of the contest.

But before I had time to chide Stranahan on this senseless outburst, I was occupied by a new observation. The struggling men were advancing across the stage, and slowly intruding upon the flower beds. But none seemed to notice, and the pandemonium continued until the actors were beating down the flowers on all sides and not a hollyhock or tulip or violet remained.

Then suddenly one of the men was thrust out of the wild multitude, and lay on the ground as if dead, his clothes ripped and torn, his body gashed and bleeding. But no one seemed to notice him, and his shrieks and howls rang forth until another had been flung aside with broken limbs, and then another, and then another. In the end only two remained standing, both grappling desperately for a little metallic disk that glittered a deep yellow. With bestial snarls and screeches they wrestled over this trinket; and at length, still wrestling, and with faces blood-red and distorted, they tumbled, moaning, off the stage.

After this exhibition there was silence for several minutes. I was glad when at length Agripides seemed

Then while the clamor increased and the buildings heaved and wavered with the motion of tossing ships at sea, the ground beneath them gave a sharp [illegible] downward and the towers all at once collapsed. But even as I had the thunder of the overthrown walls died down, when a new and more ominous roaring came to my ears, a tumult as of Niagara or of sea-waves splashing the cliffs . . .

to feel that his audience was ready for a change of mood, and again took the center of the stage.

"Members of the National Assembly," he said, "you have now observed modern life in two of its more common phases. You will find something no less familiar in the third phase, which I am about to present to you."

This time a gigantic clattering black machine was rolled on to the stage by some unseen power, its innumerable wheels and belts and chains in rapid motion, some of them moving so swiftly as to look like whirring shadows. But it was not the speed or smoothness of its action that made the mechanism remarkable: all about its side, in a long, even row, stood scores of grime-faced and sooty men, their feet clamped to the ground by iron vises, their arms fastened by long rods to the wheels above. And all the while those rods were moving, moving with rhythmic, clock-like regularity, moving unceasingly up and down, pulling the arms of the men with them, first the right arm and then the left, then again the right and then the left, as though they had done so for all eternity and would continue to do so for all eternity.

"The devil take me," muttered Stranahan, who had to have his way, "It ain't the men that work the machines! It's the machines that work the men!"

I am afraid that Stranahan's remarks diverted my attention and made me miss part of the performance, for when next I turned my eyes to the stage, the scene was much changed. A great claw-like steel device was reaching out from the interior of the machine, seizing one of the men, wrenching him from his position as though he had been a misplaced screw, and casting him bleeding to the floor. And while he lay there moaning and helpless, a clamor of shouts was heard from off stage, and a score of tattered men came rushing in and threw themselves down before the machine as if in reverence. And, as though endowed with intelligence, the machine seemed to hear, for it reached out the same great claw-like hand, clutched one of the men at random, and thrust him into the place of the rejected one. And now the arms of the newcomer began to work up and down, up and down unremittingly, accompanying the steel rods in the same even and automatic fashion as the arms of his predecessor.

The next feature on the program was a long oration delivered in Agripides' most celebrated words; following which the actor prepared the way for the climax by a few explanatory comments. "Members of the National Assembly," said he, still using phrases first uttered three thousand years before, "I wish you to look carefully at Axios, which, as you know, is one of the leading commercial cities of our age. First gaze upon its domes and towers as they are now familiar to you; then behold them as they will be when the unleashed waters of the Atlantic come sweeping across them; then open your eyes wide for a foreglimpse of our land in the golden era after the Submergence."

EVEN as the last words were uttered, my attention was drawn to the huge amorphous mass which lay cloaked in white linen at one side of the stage. Invisible hands seemed to take hold of the covering; slowly it was lifted into the air, then slowly pulled to one side and out of sight. At first I could only gape in astonishment—the strangest of all conceivable things was being unbared! Distinctly I was reminded of the paintings I had seen in various of the halls of Archeon—that which stared before me was a city in miniature, but a city such as I would have expected no Atlantean to conceive. Not the faintest resemblance did it bear to this undersea realm of statue-like temples and many-columned palaces; rather, it was like a city of the modern world. Row upon unbending row of box-like edifices, apparently of granite or brick, loomed at irregular heights and with flat, ungarnished roofs; tier after tier of little oblong windows looked out from the smoke-stained sides of the towers; slender defiles, so narrow that they reminded one of light-wells, separated the opposing ranks of masonry; and at the base of these dreary gray pits swarmed masses of dark-robed men and women, jammed together so compactly that one wondered if they were not standing on each other's toes.

"By the Blessed Mother, if it ain't little old New York!" stuttered Stranahan, nudging me knowingly in the side.

Even as he spoke, I was startled by a noise as of a thunder clap. And the next instant, the midget men and women scattered pellmell, vanishing through little openings in the walls. Meanwhile the thunder claps continued, loud-rumbling and resonant, one crash pealing and reverberating before the echoes of the last had died away; and miniature lightnings darted and flared from the great greenish vault above. As the display proceeded, it grew constantly brighter and more vivid; and I was wondering what the sequel would be, when suddenly there came a blast so loud that I clapped my hands to my ears in terror. Simultaneously a brilliant blade of light seemed to cut dagger-like through the buildings, wrapping them momentarily in a sheet of flame; the walls seemed to be heaving and trembling as though in an earthquake's claws, and there came to my ears a rattling and crashing as of falling masonry.

Then, while the clamor increased and the buildings heaved and wavered with the motion of tossing ships at sea, the ground beneath them gave a sharp lunge downward; and like toy castles, the towers all at once collapsed, some falling over their neighbors in crashing confusion, some shaken into great dusty piles of mortar and stone, some stripped of their walls yet still standing with gaunt contorted ribs of steel, some bursting into flame that glared and crackled fiendishly and poured out dense, black spirals of smoke.

But scarcely had the thunder of the overthrown walls died down when a new and more ominous roaring came to my ears, a tumult as of Niagara or of sea-waves splashing the cliffs. Out of the great earthen basin into which the ruined city had subsided, there issued a foaming confusion of waters, as though a reservoir had burst its dam; and from all sides a white-flecked torrent came plunging down upon the wrecked towers, struggling and storming above their lower stories as if to wash them utterly away. And it seemed that they were to have their will, for the towers were sinking, visibly sinking beneath the waves. Heap after gigantic heap of debris dipped its head into the waters and was lost to view; edifice after looming edifice, dismantled and battered, was engulfed by the insatiable flood. And now the fires no longer burned and the smoke no longer soared; now only two or three tortured steel columns reached out of the indifferent sea; now only one was left, one lean and crooked metallic shaft like the agonized clutching hand of a drowning man. But soon even this had slipped from view, and the frothy-tongued, deep-blue waters gave no sign that a city had ever barred their path.

And as the last trace of old Atlantis vanished, a grayness as of twilight suffused the scene; the golden lights became dim, and dimmer still, until they had

fluttered out altogether, and blackness blotted all things from our gaze.

But as we sat there spellbound in the dark, feeling like men who had beheld the end of all things, there came an airy change to break the dreariness of our mood. From far, far away, apparently whole worlds away, issued a faint tinkling music, more like the song of elves than of any mortal being. It was half like the loveliness that one hears in dreams, and more than half like the remote ghostly melodies borne to one across the wind; but gradually it grew nearer, gradually louder and more distinct, although its ethereal and fairy-like quality still remained. At length I recognized that it proceeded from a chorus of voices, a wonderfully sweet womanly chorus whose members may have been human but who seemed little less than angelic. For it was with a divine exaltation that they sang, and their tones were the tones of immortal sweetness and hope, and they seemed to assure me that all was well with the world and with life, and that beauty and happiness must triumph.

As the singing continued, the darkness was gradually dispersed; yet the great orb above did not resume the full brightness of the Atlantean day, but remained subdued to a rose-tinged twilight glow. And in that twilight a troop of shimmering-gowned dancing maidens appeared, swinging from side to side with superbly harmonious movements of arm and waist and ankle until they seemed not so much individual dancers as parts of the eternal rhythm of the universe. But whether the singing proceeded from them or from persons unseen was more than I could judge; for just then my eye was caught by the leader of the dancers, and my thoughts were as if paralyzed. As she glided from side to side with movements like music, she smiled a gloriously sweet smile; and that smile seemed to be bent full upon me, though here my imagination may have borne false reports. But with furiously thumping heart and a surging of something dangerously like tenderness, I realized that Aelios had kept her promise to see me at the pageant.

CHAPTER XVI

An Official Summons

THREE or four days after the pageant, I was surprised to receive a visitor in the shape of a serious-looking gray old man whom I did not remember ever having seen before. In his hand he bore a little blue-sealed parchment scroll, on which my name had been inscribed in the native language; and by his grave manner, and particularly by the significant way in which he held the document, I feared that his mission might prove of ominous importance.

My first impression was that I had unwittingly violated some local law, and was being summoned to court to answer for the crime. But this fear was swiftly dissipated. "I congratulate you, young man," said my visitor, having determined that I was the person he sought. "This is an occasion such as comes but once in a lifetime." And with a sedate and deferential air, and apparently not surmising that the nature of his mission was still a mystery to me, he passed the little document to me; following which he congratulated me again, and solemnly bowed his way out of the room.

I now suspected that I was either the recipient of some high honor or the appointee to some responsible office. It is no wonder, accordingly, that my fingers trembled when I ripped open the blue seal, and that in my eagerness I almost tore the parchment as well. But again my expectations were to prove ill-founded. The message turned out to be very brief; and, far from providing cause either for exultation or dismay, it served merely to puzzle me.

"To the respected Anson Harkness," ran the words, which were handsomely formed in the native script, "the Committee on Selective Assignments wishes to announce that it is ready for the hearings and examinations in his case. If he will therefore be so kind as to present himself at the Committee offices any noon during the next ten days, he may be assured that the investigations will be carried out with a minimum of delay and a decision promptly rendered."

And that was all, except for the signature of the Head of the Committee! Not a word as to what the Selective Assignments might be! Not a word as to the nature of the "hearings and examinations!" Time after time I re-read this queer message, scrutinizing it until I had memorized it in its entirety; but the more I read the more perplexed I became, and I could almost believe myself the target of some practical joker. Just what was to be investigated? And what decision was to be reached? Was it that my conduct was thought improper and was to be reviewed? That I was considered too scornful of local customs, or too friendly to Aelios? Or—judging from the congratulatory manner of the gray-haired one—was I somehow deemed worthy of reward, possibly through the connivance of Aelios? Or was I to be examined as prize scholars are sometimes examined before being granted a scholarship?

To confess the truth, none of these possibilities appeared very credible to me. But I could think of nothing more plausible, and at length was forced to recognize that the mystery was too deep for my penetration. The only reasonable course would be to consult one of the natives, who could doubtless answer all my questions without any trouble. And since I was acquainted with only one of the natives besides my tutor, and since it would give me particular pleasure to consult that one, I decided that, if possible, I should refer the baffling document to Aelios.

But how to isolate Aelios long enough for a conversation was in itself a problem. After some thought, however, I conceived an idea which seemed promising: if I could determine where Aelios lived and then pay her a visit, I might solve the mystery of the Selective Assignments at the same time as I made possible a closer intimacy with Aelios herself.

Yet it was only by a severe effort that I found the courage to carry out my plans —— to follow Aelios one afternoon after the conclusion of her day's instruction. Through innumerable curving lanes and avenues I trailed her and her fellow tutors, pressing close to the columns and the walls of the building, like a detective tracking his prey. At length, when we seemed to be approaching the outskirts of the city, Aelios waved a pleasant farewell to her companions, and started off alone down a little path bordered by a deep-red geranium-like flower. Thinking this to be my opportunity, I hastened my footsteps; but before I could overtake her she had reached the end of the path, and, quite oblivious of my approach, had entered the arching doorway of a house—or, should I call it a palace?—with curving convex walls of the color of pearl.

For several minutes I stood wavering without. And it was in half-timid hesitancy that at last I forced my feet to the threshold and urged my hands to rap at the violet stained-glass panels of the door.

It was but a minute before the sound of approaching footsteps notified me that I had not knocked in vain. But in that minute I was swept by wild hopes

and still wilder torments and regrets. Would it be Aelios herself that answered me? Or would it be some member of her family, possibly her mother or father, or else a sister almost as charming as herself? And, if so, what should I say? and on what business pretend to seek a conference with Aelios?

While I was wrapped in such thoughts, the door swung open, and I found myself face to face—not with Aelios, nor with her mother or father, nor with a sister of hers! But a young man of perhaps twenty-five, broad-browed and sparkling-eyed like most of the Atlanteans, stood looking inquiringly out at me.

"Is this—is this where Aelios lives?" I gasped, in embarrassment.

"Yes, Aelios lives here," he returned, in matter-of-fact tones. And then, with a winning smile, "You would like to see her?"

I admitted that he had surmised correctly, and was relieved to be admitted into the house without further questioning. Having passed through a broad hallway or vestibule illumined by large, swinging orange-colored lamps, we entered a daintily tapestried sitting room featured by lanterns of pale blue. The young man bade me be seated on the seaweed-decorated sofa, and then left me momentarily to myself; and in that brief snatch of solitude I found myself assailed by storms of jealous questions. Who was the young man? And in what relationship did he stand to Aelios? Was he perchance some suitor of hers? Or was he merely her brother? Or was it possible—oh, unspeakable thought!—that she was already married, and that this was her husband?

At the latter reflection I experienced in advance all the pangs of unsuccessful love. My head swam with senseless fury; I was weighed down with anticipatory despair, and saw myself the victim of hopes that could never be fulfilled. I had just reached the darkest point of my broodings, and was just telling myself that of course I could never attract so admirable a woman as Aelios, when I heard a well known melodious voice murmuring, "What is the matter today, my friend? What are you so depressed about?"

RECALLED from my dejection as from a bad dream, I sprang up to take the hand of Aelios, who was smiling as graciously as though my visit had been expected and even welcomed.

But what I next said I cannot recall. No doubt it was some bit of nonsense not worth repeating; indeed, it would perhaps have been some bit of sentimental nonsense, had I not recalled the existence of the unknown young man. But since I was too diffident to inquire who he might be, and since the thought of him remained with me in spite of Aelios' kindness, I refrained from all sentimental advances in this, our first private meeting. It is true, that whenever her blue eyes flashed, they drew me toward her like twin magnets; it is true, that whenever she smiled, her inexpressibly sweet smile, I yearned to dash down all barriers in one long fervent confession; yet I was thankful even to be able to sit side by side with her quietly talking. In the wide years that separate me now from that brief enchanted interview, my memory has lost track of what she said, it merely retains how she said it; I can recall the sparkling eagerness with which her words poured forth, like the wavelets of a rapid crystal stream; I can recapture the sage nodding and tossing of her head, the ripples of deep feeling that passed and repassed on her mobile countenance, the luminesence as from some inner sun that would make her whole face shine as she uttered some rare bit of wit or fancy. But I do not even know the subject of our discussion, except that it was a theme suggested by her and that it was impersonal; I only know that it was she who did most of the talking while I looked on in awed worship, and that either she was blind to my reverence for her or else chose to ignore it.

It was not until I rose to leave that my thoughts reverted to the subject which had brought me to see Aelios. And then, since the hour was late and my mood was no longer prosaic, I did not choose to discuss that topic long. I merely showed Aelios the letter, which she glanced at briefly and with a broad smile; then she surprised me by congratulating me just as the gray-haired bearer of the message had done.

But she was exceedingly chary of information. "If you will go to the Committee offices," she suggested, "the whole matter will be made much clearer to you than I could make it." And, after directing me where to find the offices, she added, "I'd advise you to waste no time, or else you may lose your turn and have to wait another half year. You know, that's what happened once to my cousin Argol, who met you at the door just before."

Genuinely gratified that my doubts about Cousin Argol had been dispersed, I thanked Aelios and turned to leave. My heart pattered happily when I found her accompanying me to the outer door; and I felt an actual thrill of joy when she pressed her little hand firmly in my great one, and murmured, in tones that could leave no doubt of her sincerity, "Come again, my friend. Come whenever you wish some one to talk with. I shall always be glad to see you."

And it was with a glow of triumph that I found myself walking down the flower-bordered walk toward the main avenue. Aelios was more friendly than I had had any reason to expect!—her company was even more charming than I had imagined! Considering all things, I had every cause to be thankful, and who knew but that some day— But here my thoughts reached a dazzling veil beyond which I would not allow them to penetrate, for there were still heights that I could not mount even in my most daring fancies.

CHAPTER XVII

The High Initiation

PROMPTLY at noon the following day I presented myself before the Committee on Selective Assignments. The offices, which I found without difficulty, were located on the lower floor of an imposing blue-tinted granite edifice; and the Committee itself occupied a hall reminding me vaguely of a court-room, except that its ornamental columns and busts and statues were unparalleled in any court-room I had ever seen. Before a long marble railing sat about fifteen men and women, some old but several conspicuously young. All were perched on cushioned marble seats before little marble pedestals or writing stands, and to their rear were cases lined with rows of parchment-bound volumes that lent the place a scholarly dignity. In front of them, across the railing, were half a dozen tiers of blue stone benches; and on each of the benches stood a huge pile of books, as though the spectators were expected to make use of their time during any delay in the proceedings.

But I was not admitted at once into this great hall. First I was escorted into a small anteroom, where three Atlanteans—two youths of about twenty, and a girl of the same age—were seated studiously reading. From a little parchment document which each carried, I felt sure that they were here on a mission

Some of the trees had branches symmetrically woven into the likenesses of great cobwebs, and from those cobwebs at regular intervals dangled clusters of grape-like fruits, other trees were cactus-like and leafless; and some of the shrubs and creepers bore pods resembling those of beans and peas, except that they were over a foot in length. The vast majority of this strange assemblage of plants seemed to be fruit-bearing . . .

similar to my own; but so preoccupied did they seem, that I had no opportunity to question them. For a moment I merely stared at them impatiently; then, turning to ispect the room, I was delighted to observe a pile of little books on a reed stand in one corner.

AFTER a single curious glance, I began examining these volumes with hungry interest. Their very titles proved alluring, far more alluring than anything printed I had yet seen in Atlantis, with the exception of the lost Homeric masterpiece. Some were works of information dealing with subjects so varied as "Post-Submergence Mural Art," "The Rise of Government by Selection," "The Stimulation of Plant Life by Artificial Sunlight," "History of the Abolition of Crime," or "History of the Decline of the Upper World"; others were essays on such rare topics as "The Cultivation of Genius," "Is Altruism One of the Human Instincts?" and "How Atlantis Found the World by Losing It"; still others were works of literature, and, though I had no time to observe them carefully, I saw that they included an epic poem on "Agripides," a volume of lyrics by some unknown writer of two thousand years ago as well as selections from a dozen lyricists of the present, a poetic drama evidently designed for performance at the annual celebration of the Submergence, several novels and a collection of stories, and a romance of the far future entitled "Super-Art."

But what particularly engaged my attention was a genial little satire known as "The Prisoner." This story, which was written in a crisp and simple style that I found delightful, recounted how an Atlantean of a thousand years before had been sentenced, as the penalty for his sins, to pass his remaining years in the upper world. Having been sent above seas in a little water-tight craft propelled by intra-atomic engines, he had set about to seek his fortune in his new surroundings; and, finding that the way to win distinction was to accumulate much gold, he applied his superior Atlantean wits so well that in a short while he became fabulously wealthy. But, after attaining what was reputed to be success, he discovered that his wealth meant nothing to him; he was hungry for the art and the beauty of Atlantis, without which the world seemed barbarous and empty. Even though he could have purchased any treasure or luxury on earth, he took to morbid repining; he brooded and brooded until he went completely out of his wits, which were finally restored to him when the Atlanteans took pity and decided to let him return. And so the poor man went back to his native land, having first forfeited his riches; and this was the last case of insanity even known among the Atlanteans.

I had just completed this little story when I was roused to reality by hearing a strange voice sonorously pronouncing my name. Looking up, I saw a lavender-gowned man motioning me toward the main Committee Room; and I observed with surprise that the youths and the girl had disappeared while I was absorbed in my book.

I found the central hall empty except for the fifteen men and women sedately seated behind the railing; but at sight of these grave individuals I felt my misgivings returning, and wished that I could have been anywhere else in the universe.

"This is Anson Harkness, is it not?" rang forth the high-pitched and yet not unpleasant voice of an aged man whose proximity to the railing indicated that he was the head of the Committee. And after I had assured him that I was the person designated, the Head Member continued, earnestly and yet not so menacingly as I had expected, "Be seated, Anson Harkness. It is an important matter that brings you here. And I believe that, in your case, more than the usual amount of time and thought will be necessary before we can reach a decision."

The Head Member paused, cleared his throat, and slowly proceeded, "I trust that you will co-operate with us to the best of your ability, for only so can we expect satisfactory results. Just as the average man is betrothed but once in his life, so he appears but once before this Committee; and since, as in the case of a betrothal, much may depend upon the proper choice—"

"I beg your pardon, sir," I interrupted, unable to endure these long-winded sentences that only added to my confusion, "Would you mind telling me why I am here? As yet I haven't the faintest idea."

The Head Member peered at me in mild surprise; his fourteen associates darted inquiring looks at one another.

"Why, yes, that is a proper question," he resumed, blandly. "I had forgotten: you are a foreigner, and are unacquainted with our ways. You will understand, of course that foreigners were so totally unknown before your coming that the necessity for explanation had not occurred to me. However, the whole matter can be made clear in a few words. You are summoned for what is known as the High Initiation—in other words, this should be the happiest day of your life, since you are now regarded as having reached maturity and so may set forth upon your career of service to the State."

HAVING been a voter in the United States for the past eleven years, I was not flattered to be told that I had reached maturity. None the less, I held my tongue, and listened patiently as the Head Member continued.

"The government tutor who has been instructing you," he pursued, "has reported that you have at least an elementary knowledge of our language and customs, and suggests that you be assigned at once to service. Acting upon his recommendation, we intend to promote you to duties that accord as nearly as possible with your desires and capabilities. But first we must say a word as to the methods in vogue in our land. Ever since the great social revolution which occurred in the second century after the submergence and which for a time threatened to engulf us in chaos, we have employed what is known as the Beehive System of labor—which means that every citizen is required to perform a certain minimum amount of work for the State in order to accomplish those tasks indispensable for our continued existence. Fortunately, the utilization of intra-atomic energy and the elimination of waste and of duplication of effort have reduced the essential work to one-tenth of that thought necessary before the Submergence; and the average citizen now labors not more than an hour and a half or two hours a day. There have, indeed, been occasional men and women so enamored of their employment as to insist on working four or five hours, but such excessive application is not encouraged, for it is believed to overcast the mind and blunt the esthetic sensibilities."

"Then for heaven's sake," I burst forth, thinking this country to be wholly without "push" and energy, "What do people here do with their time? If they don't work, they must be simply bored to death!"

The Head Member regarded me with a tolerant smile, as one might regard a lunatic who makes some harmless remark.

"That is where you misunderstand the meaning of the word work," he explained, with something of the manner of a schoolmaster to a backward pupil. "Our people do work, and work diligently indeed, and sometimes work many hours a day—but not on those barren practical duties to which they are assigned, and which are necessary merely in order that the community may exist. As soon as any man or woman has passed the period of elementary instruction and is assigned to service by this Committee, he finds himself in possession of many leisure hours a day—and those hours of leisure constitute the important part of his life, and it is on their account that he is to be congratulated on reaching maturity. For now he may have the opportunity both for self-expression and for the better sort of service to the State; he may devote himself to study, research or creation in any field that suits his fancy (there is absolutely no restriction in this regard, although every one is expected to apply himself to some definite pursuit). One, for example, may elect to paint landscapes; a second to conduct some elaborate philosophic inquiry; a third to write poetry; a fourth to investigate the ways of marine animals; a fifth to be an actor, or a musical virtuoso, or the author of historical essays, or a critic of architecture, or a designer of fine tapestries."

"But what if one finds nothing at all that he can do?" I inquired, wondering how on earth I could fit myself into this superior scheme of things.

"Oh, but one must find something!" declared the Head Member, while his colleagues eyed one another with looks implying that I was really too naïve for belief. "It would be a disgrace to do nothing at all except one's practical duties. It would mean that one had been a failure in life; that one's existence had added nothing to the world. Why, there isn't more than one such a case a year—and then it's usually found that the poor sufferer has been the victim of some accident, which blunted his mental faculties."

The Head Member paused; and while I had horrific visions of myself as the first failure in a year, one of the members just to the rear of the Head Member leaned over and whispered something into his ear. Just what he said I could not catch, but the evident effect was to hasten proceedings, for the chief official promptly turned to me, and, with unwonted directness, continued, "Well, now that we have made all the necessary explanations, let us get down to the actual assignment. Just what sort of work do you think you would prefer, young man?"

Having no reason to believe that I would prefer any work at all, I did nothing but gape blankly at the speaker.

"I am surprised at your hesitancy," that sedate individual at length continued, blandly. "There is so much for you to do that I should think you would simply overwhelm us with suggestions."

BUT I fear that I continued to do nothing but look blank. "You will pardon me," I pleaded, when the suspense had become embarrassing, "if I leave the suggestions to you. I really know so little about Atlantis that I couldn't possibly choose wisely."

"True, you do know little about Atlantis," coincided the Head Member, with a smile. "But there is something about which you undoubtedly know a great deal, and about which we Atlanteans know nothing at all."

"You mean—my own country?" I demanded, while all the members of the Committee leaned forward with interested glances.

"Of course—your own country, and the upper world in general," the Head Member nodded, approvingly. "You must remember, our latest news of your world was received some three thousand years ago. Even for a leisurely people like us, that is a long while. You cannot imagine how curious we are as to all that has happened since."

"And that's what you want me to tell you?"

"Naturally. We know, to be sure, that no one man could begin to tell us everything, but at least we'd like to learn the general outline of events. And so we are thinking of appointing you Official Historian of the Upper World."

"Official Historian of the Upper World!" I repeated, like one in a daze.

"Yes. Why not? Judging from the fact that you've made quicker progress in our language than any of your companions, we think you would perhaps be better qualified for the office."

"But I haven't specialized in history—" I started to plead.

"We're more interested in general movements than in particular incidents," explained the Head Member. "The sort of knowledge that any educated man might give us, is what we want.

"You certainly are not unacquainted with the present civilization up above, are you?"

"No, not altogether," I was forced to acknowledge.

"And you've been taught a reasonable amount about the past, have you not?"

"I've taken a number of history courses at college, if that's what you mean."

"Excellent! Excellent!" And the Head Member beamed upon me ingratiatingly. "Then the rest should be a mere matter of study and application. You don't object to the appointment, do you?"

I confessed that I did not object.

Whereupon, turning to his associates, he inquired, "Do you all approve of the appointment of Anson Harkness as Official Historian of the Upper World?"

Since there was no dissent among the Committee members, my life-work was apparently settled.

"But just what do you expect me to do?" I queried, somewhat doubtfully, after my appointment had been confirmed.

"You are to write a history of the upper world, of course," explained the Head Member, surprised that I should ask the obvious. "How you are to proceed will be for you to decide; but you must remember that this will be your assigned work, to which you are expected to devote not less than two hours a day. I might point out, moreover, that yours is one of those rare cases where the assigned work is so important that you might do well to combine it with your optional work, and so dedicate your time exclusively to your duties as historian."

"Perhaps that would be the best way," I agreed, for it struck me that the task before me would require all my energies.

But at that juncture an important question occurred to me. I did not wish to seem too commercial; but it was evident that the examiners had overlooked something essential. "Now as to the practical returns," I ventured, mildly. "I know, of course, that I cannot expect to be paid very much—"

"To be paid?" repeated four or five of the Committee members all at once, with looks of such sheer amazement that I knew that I had blundered.

"Oh, then perhaps I must show you some results first?" I suggested, perceiving no other alternative.

For two or three seconds there was silence—an ominous, puzzling silence which made me realize that I had given deep offense.

"Young man," the Head Member at length broke

forth, severely, "I fear that you are under a grave misapprehension. "But possibly you are not wholly to blame, for it may be that your own country still labors under those primitive social arrangements which we Atlanteans abolished three thousand years ago. Know, then, that there is no such thing as payment in our land. There is no money; there is no medium of exchange. You do your work, and in return receive all the necessaries of life; your meals are brought to you by State employees, just as they have been brought to you thus far; you are also lodged by the State, clothed by the State, educated by the State; the State works of art are at your disposal, you are admitted freely to all State entertainments, and are even granted periodic vacations to break the monotony of existence. What more could any man desire?"

"No more, of course," I conceded, feeling utterly crushed.

"Very well, then," said the official, with an indulgent smile that made me feel ridiculous. "Now there is only one more matter to be decided. How would you like to set out on your travels the day after tomorrow?"

"What travels?" I gasped, wondering what on earth he could mean.

"Why, evidently you haven't heard about that, either!" remarked the Head Member, noting my surprise. "You see, every Atlantean, upon receiving his assignment and before taking up his duties, is expected to make a tour of the country, so as to acquaint himself with it at first hand. Otherwise, how could he expect to voice himself intelligently on national affairs?"

Having nothing to say in reply, I merely gaped and remained silent.

"Ordinarily, this journey requires about a month," my informer proceeded. "The trip is made entirely on foot, so that one may observe the country thoroughly. There is a party leaving in two days—perhaps you would like to join them."

"Very well," I assented. And, after being advised regarding a few details of the trip and then notified of my dismissal, I went away feeling more puzzled than ever, for I could not believe that Atlantis could show me anything more marvelous than it had already shown.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Journey Commences

TWO days later I set out on what was to prove the most extraordinary excursion of my life. Arriving early in the morning at the appointed meeting place—an open, flower-bordered "circle" or park near the western end of the town—I was greeted by a score of eager young men and women, who introduced themselves as my traveling companions. They were all in an excited, highly animated condition, chatting and jesting continually, moving about restlessly, gay with the gaiety of high expectations; and they all, without exception, were conspicuously and vividly youthful, for their ages must have varied between eighteen and twenty-one. At the same time, they resembled their fellow Atlanteans in that they looked utterly wholesome and unworldly, and had the grace and beauty of persons whose lives have been unstained and whose minds untarnished.

I was just wondering whether these attractive creatures were to be my sole companions, when I was surprised by the sight of four newcomers—two men and two women of somewhat maturer years than the others. At the moment of their arrival they were surrounded so enthusiastically by the members of the party that I had not a chance for a clear glimpse of them; but even a partial glimpse was enough to make me stop short with a gasp of delight—among their number I thought I saw the sparkling blue eyes of Aelios! At first I was not sure; but with fast-throbbing heart I pressed forward, and to my inexpressible joy found that I had not been mistaken.

"Aelios!" I cried, as soon as I could manage to draw her to one side. "Aelios—what are you doing here?"

She smiled her bewilderingly sweet smile, but did not choose to answer directly. "What are you doing here?" she countered.

"Why, you should know without asking," I reminded her. "Didn't I show you my summons from the Committee on Selective Assignments?"

"Yes, I remember," she murmured. "Only, I didn't know you would set out on your travels so soon. But I'm really very glad. Now you'll be a full-fledged citizen of Atlantis!"

"But are you going with us, Aelios? Are you going, too?" I asked, still unable to credit my good fortune.

"Yes, I am going." And, observing how quizzically I was regarding her, she continued, "You see, three or four tutors are assigned to each of the traveling parties, for we have made the journey before, and are able to explain the sights along the way."

"But how can you leave so suddenly?" I questioned, remembering Stranahan's daily lessons. "How about—how about the work you were doing here?"

"Oh, I am excused, of course, until my return. Some other tutor is substituted for me, and everything goes along smoothly enough with my students."

"Their loss is our good fortune," said I, quite truthfully; and Aelios acknowledged the compliment with a gracious bow, and then smilingly rejoined the other tutors.

A few minutes later we were under way. We crossed the Salty River on a long bridge overarched with a crystal arcade and lined with friezes representing mythological scenes; then on the northern bank, we followed a little winding lane westward at the base of the marble palaces and towers. Before many minutes, we approached the borders of the city; and when at length we passed into the open country, my companions experienced a rare burst of high spirits. Some gave expression to their feelings by low, soft cries of joy; some capered, romped and laughed merrily along the way; some engaged in loud-pitched and enthusiastic discussions; but all looked carefree and happy indeed; and I could not help being infected with their gay mood. I experienced nothing of the constraint that might have been only natural, for my companions seemed to accept me frankly as one of them, and in consequence I felt hardly out of place. Before long I was chatting with several of the young men as volubly as though I had known them all their lives.

Of Aelios I caught no more than a glimpse on that first day. She seemed to be absorbed in her conversations with the other tutors; and an occasional smiling glance in my direction was all that she would vouchsafe me. But I was happy merely to know that she was near, and was convinced that succeeding days would offer opportunities to strengthen our friendship. And at the same time I was so well occupied that I had little leisure for thinking of anybody in particular.

To one who has never been underseas and gazed at the landscapes of that incredible world, it will be impossible to convey any idea of the enthusiasm and the wonder I felt. Already I had beheld marvels in

Atlantis, marvels sufficient to bewilder the most audacious imagination; but that which I now observed was so unique as momentarily to overshadow even my previous discoveries.

FOR the first hour after leaving the city we pursued a little path that ran almost in a straight line along the banks of the Salty River. Opposite us, across the stream, stretched the long, low contours of the colonnades and temples I had inspected soon after arriving in Atlantis; and at our feet the waters shot swiftly by, with gentle swishing and murmuring, a green-gray expanse several hundred yards across, but differing from all other rivers I had ever beheld in that it was of the same width at all points and flowed in a straight and orderly manner without any twists, turns or meanderings.

All this, of course, I had already observed; and my first surprises were not to come until at length the road bent abruptly northward away from the river and we entered what was for me a virgin territory. As we advanced, the vegetation became denser and more curious; tall reeds, bushes and trees began to cluster about us until I had the impression of being lost in a jungle. But it was a jungle such as no explorer has ever viewed in the wilds of Africa, New Guinea, or Brazil, for the plants were so fantastic that even the strange undersea vegetation I had already beheld seemed commonplace by comparison. Here, for the first time, the trees were of a vivid green, and a normal foliage was abundant; yet there was so much which looked abnormal that I could only stare and stare in amazement. Some of the trees had branches symmetrically woven into the likenesses of great cobwebs, and from those cobwebs at regular intervals dangled clusters of grape-like fruits; other trees were cactus-like and leafless, with huge round protuberances at regular intervals along their spiny boles; still others were almost concealed amid thick meshes of vines, or were adorned with multicolored cup-shaped blossoms larger than a man's head, or dominated by scores of succulent-looking stalks like gigantic asparagus. Then again some were little more than great rounded and compressed masses of leafage, reminding me of ten-foot cabbages; and some would have struck me as nothing more than ordinary mushrooms, had they not reached as high as my waist; and some of the shrubs and creepers bore pods resembling those of beans and peas, except that they were over a foot in length. But the most conspicuous fact about this strange assemblage of plants was that the vast majority seemed to be fruit-bearing; and on all sides one could observe a multitude of green fruits of all sizes and shapes, as well as a profusion of the ripening and ripe product, some of it small as cherries and some large as watermelons, some pale green and some gaudy red, some lemon-hued and some a modest pink and some a deep purple, but all striking one by a contrast and a variety as pleasing to the eye as it was extraordinary.

As we entered this peculiar jungle-like region, I noted a marked change in the atmosphere. For the first time, I became aware that there could be such a thing as climate in Atlantis: the air was growing dank and overheated, and I had the impression of having entered the tropics. And simultaneously I observed an increase of light that for the moment dazzled me, and I felt as if a torrid sun were burning directly above. Yet the source of the added warmth and illumination was in no way a mystery: brilliant white lamps had been placed at intervals along the great roof-supporting tinted columns, glaring down upon the foliage like miniature suns, and combining with the larger golden orbs to lend the scene a dream-like and unearthly beauty.

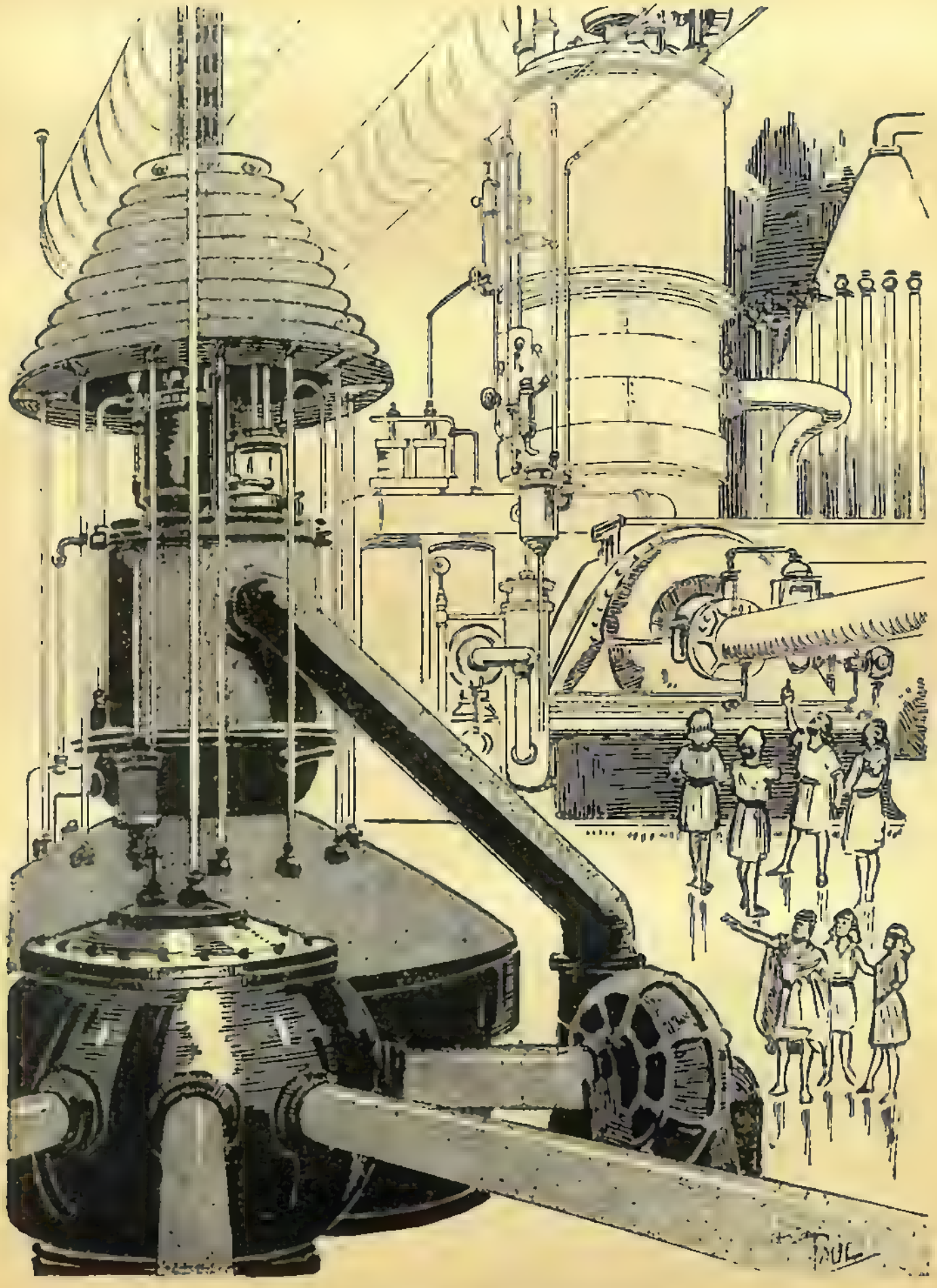
Before long I noted that the vegetation was interrupted every few hundred yards by a ditch from five to ten feet across and filled to the brim with sluggish brown water. Had not these trenches invariably been of even width and geometrical straightness, I might have mistaken them for rivulets; but their precise outlines would permit but one interpretation, and they brought me remembrances of the irrigation canals I had seen on the semi-arid plains of Arizona and California. It seemed, however, that they served more than a single purpose; for as we crossed a little arching bridge over one of the widest of their waterways, I saw a long, flat boat anchored just beneath my feet; and four or five men, clad in close-fitting gray instead of in the usual long-flowing tinted robes, were busy loading this barge with newly plucked clusters of blue and crimson and orange-colored fruit.

Even had there been no one to enlighten me concerning these queer jungles, I would now have understood their general nature. Still they seemed to embody a multitude of mysteries, mysteries to be explained by no known laws of biology; and, accordingly, I listened eagerly when one of the tutors, finding himself besieged by an enthusiastic, questioning coterie, launched forth upon an explanatory discourse.

"From the earliest times, as you know," said he, speaking informally, and yet with something of the manner of a professor addressing his class, "We Atlanteans have been skilled in horticulture. To begin with, nature provided the stimulus, for the flora of an island such as Atlantis is apt to be unique, and that of our own country was particularly so. But long before the Submergence, we had outdone nature by developing a multitude of new plants; and since the Submergence our botanists have busied themselves incessantly with the study of artificial stimulation of vegetable life. It is well known how industriously they have experimented, trying the effect of new soils and environments, grafting the limbs of innumerable bushes and trees, cross-fertilizing and encouraging all favorable chance growths or "sports"; and in these pursuits they have been aided by the altered environment of Atlantis, which seems favorable to rapid and sudden variation, and has given rise to innumerable varieties of plants unknown before.

"I do not need to tell you how essential all this has been for the maintenance of Atlantean life, for our land is limited in extent and much of it is unsuited for agriculture; only by the intensive and forced development of the rest can we hope to support our people. And so it has been necessary to evolve food-plants that would produce more prolifically than any known before; and at the same time we have had to develop a light which would be the chemical equivalent of sunlight, and so would stimulate the chlorophyl of the leaves, the original source of all organic matter. This, to be sure, was accomplished even before the Submergence; but since the Submergence there has been a constant improvement in the quality of the artificial sunlight; and in the eleventh century A. S., the great chemist, Sorandos, produced a light actually superior to sunlight. At least (for some reason that Sorandos himself never made sufficiently plain) it stimulates plant life to an extraordinarily rapid growth, even though it has the compensating fault of inducing rapid decay. It is this light which you see shining down upon you now from the great stone columns."

THE speaker paused, and I thought the time opportune to put a question which had been puzzling



. And along each side of the broad passageway, rising almost to meet the ceiling, was a series of what I took to be gigantic boilers. All of these were connected with innumerable wires and with pipes thicker than a man's body, while at the further end of the gallery the tubes were interwoven in intricate loops, coils and convolutions like the exposed entrails of a Titan.

me. "You tell us that you have need for intensive crop production," said I, "and yet have I not heard that you can produce food chemically?"

"Yes, indeed," admitted the tutor, with a shrug. "The same light that develops the chlorophyl in plants may be employed for the synthetic manufacture of starch and sugar out of charcoal and distilled water. But that is an old-fashioned method, and not very successful on the whole, for we have found that this artificial food lacks some element essential for good health."

"Even so, why rely wholly upon plant life?" I inquired, curious to know why my diet in Atlantis had been strictly vegetarian. "Do you never—do you never eat meat?"

"Eat meat?" The tutor's tone was one of astonishment; and I observed half a dozen pairs of eyes staring at me in shocked surprise.

For a moment I felt like one who has urged cannibalism or some other barbarous rite. And my discomfort was scarcely relieved when my informant sternly declared, "There has been no meat consumed in Atlantis since the Submergence; flesh-eating has been discarded along with the other uncivilized practices of the ancients. How could we feel ourselves to be superior to the beasts and yet live at the cost of blood?"

"But are there no animals at all in Atlantis?" I found the courage to inquire.

"Oh, yes, though naturally we couldn't take care of many after the Submergence." And my companion paused, and pointed to a little red-breasted feathered thing perched amid the dense green of the foliage. "There are birds of course—we could not dispense with them. Then there are a few insects, such as the butterflies—and the bees, which give us honey and are necessary for plant pollenization—though all harmful insects were long ago destroyed. Also, there are squirrels and chipmunks and other small creatures; and in the Salty River and the canals there are numerous fish. And in some places along the banks of the Salty River there are hundreds of bullfrogs."

"Bullfrogs!" I exclaimed. "Bullfrogs!" And suddenly I understood the meaning of those strange noises which had so terrified my shipmates and myself during our first night in Atlantis!

CHAPTER XIX

The Glass City

FOR five or six hours we proceeded through the fruit-bearing jungles, which seemed limitless in extent and yet constantly displayed new and unexpected features. But the journey was by no means arduous, for twice we paused for rest and refreshments at little open-air inns that fronted the roads; at all times our pace was unhurried. And most of the party seemed still fresh and energetic when, toward the middle of the afternoon, we emerged suddenly from the thickets and saw a group of fairy-like towers gleaming straight ahead.

"That is the city of Thalos," I heard one of the tutors explaining. "It is there that we stay for the night."

As we approached, I directed my eyes eagerly upon Thalos, which even at a distance appeared strikingly different from Archeon. Indeed, it appeared strikingly different from any city I had ever seen, for no streets or thoroughfares of any kind were visible, and, as we drew near, the various buildings seemed to merge in a long unbroken line dominated by turrets, domes and spires spaced at geometrical intervals; and all those domes and spires flashed and sparkled with a multicolored light, which changed in hue and intensity with every step we took and was elusive and yet vivid as the glittering of innumerable gems.

So awe-stricken was I that I scarcely thought of questioning my companions, but hastened toward this alluring city. And the nearer I approached the more dazzled I was. By degrees I came to realize that a high wall surrounded the town; but this wall brought no reminders of the fortified bulwarks of ancient cities, for its outlines were graceful and pleasing, its color an agreeable dark blue, and its evident purpose ornamental. And when I had come within a few hundred yards of the city, I observed that its blueness was translucent, indicating that the building material was glass!—and, judging from the peculiar glistening and glinting of the towers projecting above the wall, I wondered whether stained glass were not the substance of the entire town!

This, in fact, I discovered was so. Having passed through the wall by means of a little arched gateway invisible at a distance, I found myself in what might have been a city out of the Arabian Nights. I cannot say with certainty whether I beheld a single building or a hundred, or whether I stood in an open court or in a street; for before me spread a wide expanse of glass masonry, of arches and covered galleries, of steeples and cupolas and winding balconies; and all this masonry seemed to be joined in a more or less unified whole. There may have been individual edifices, but there was no edifice not connected with its neighbors by arching walls or overhead passageways; there may have been streets winding through this wilderness of glass, but it struck me that there were only open spaces alternating with twining glass-roofed corridors. Yet, however bizarre the total impression (and bizarre it was beyond all imagining), there was also a certain unity that prevented the city from appearing grotesque; and its various segments, in their garments of lavender or pale blue or turquoise or vivid ruby, fitted together as perfectly as the parts of an intricate and beautiful mosaic.

We had barely entered the city when half a dozen natives emerged from unseen corridors and greeted us. Like the members of our own party, they were dressed in exquisite light-tinted gowns; and, like all the Atlanteans, they were well built, prepossessing of appearance and handsome; and there was a perfect natural courtesy in their manner when they assured us how welcome we were and bade us accompany them to our lodgings.

Still speechless with wonder, I followed my companions through long crystal galleries, around the base of jewel-like glimmering towers, and across flowered parks where iridiscent fountains splashed and bubbled. "This is typical of the latest in architecture," I heard one of the men saying, as he pointed up at the curving, interlinking stained glass porticoes and domes. "Thalos in its present form is not more than five centuries old, and is exclusively a development of Post-Submergence art."

Almost before these words were out of the speaker's mouth, we were led up a long flight of stairs and through an elliptical doorway into a chamber which, to my surprise, was walled and roofed not with glass, but with marble. Here we were treated to a sumptuous repast, consisting of a sort of vegetable steak, native cakes and bread, honey and fruit, which already lay spread for us on half a dozen little tables. And, after we had dined, we were each shown to a room on the roof, which was equipped with all articles that necessity or convenience could demand, and where, if we

wished, we might well rest from the day's exertions.

Some of our party may possibly have availed themselves of this opportunity; but, for my own part, I was so exciteed merely at being in Thales, that a rest was out of the question.

AS soon as I had washed myself clean of the dust of the journey, I made my way down from my roof-apartment and out of the building. As I stepped toward the outer door, I was rejoiced to see a familiar blue-clad figure preceding me down the stairs. "Aelios!" I cried; and when she turned to see what was the matter, I joined her with the breathless suggestion that we take a little stroll together. And—quite unexpectedly—she obliged me by agreeing.

"Luckily, I've been here before, and so know my way about," she said, as we started. "If you went alone, you might get lost."

"I wouldn't mind—in such a charming place," I declared, with a smile.

And then, as a means of making conversation, I remarked, "The people here are exceedingly hospitable, aren't they?"

"Hospitable?" she echoed, as if not understanding. "What makes you think that?"

Surprised, I pointed out the self-evident fact that they had lodged and feasted us so splendidly.

"Oh, it is not they that have lodged and feasted us!" she corrected. "It is the State!"

It was now my turn to look blank, and hers to explain.

"Our complete itinerary has been arranged in advance," she continued, "and all our needs will be provided for by the State, just as the State provides for us when we're at home. Obviously, that's the only possible way."

"Then is there no such thing as private property in Atlantis?" I inquired.

"Private property?" She looked puzzled, as though trying to assimilate an alien point of view. "What would be the use of private property?"

Then, seeing the dull stare with which I replied, she proceeded, "Of course, I remember that there used to be private property in the old days, before the Submergence. But that has all been abolished long ago."

"Is it possible?" I exclaimed, thinking this the most incredible statement I had yet heard.

"Well, not quite all abolished," she amended, thoughtfully. "Our clothes and books and personal ornaments are still private property, of course."

"But does the State supply one with everything else?"

"Yes, with everything, including one's clothes. You'll see for yourself when you return from this trip and set out as a citizen."

Thereupon she told me a few more facts about the State control of property, and how things such as inheritance and taxation were unknown. Then gradually the conversation shifted to less impersonal and more alluring subjects. She asked me about the world I had come from, and whether it had any architectural marvels rivalling those of Thalos; and I replied that it had not, though the skyscrapers of New York were considered wondrous enough. I was reluctant to talk about my own world, however; I did not wish to be disturbed by remembrances; I desired only to be walking with Aelios as I was walking now, and to hear her speak, and to be permitted to look into those bright and glamorous blue eyes of hers. And so I listened like one in a trance as she told me of her life, and how she had been the eldest child of two celebrated artists and had never lacked anything she really wanted, and how from her earliest years she had loved music and the dance, but particularly the dance, and had followed her childhood inclinations in her chosen work for the State, though in her prescribed work she was a tutor. All this and much more Aelios told me about herself, while I heard her with adoration that must have been all too apparent in my fascinated gaze. But she seemed without self-consciousness and without realization of the tender sentiments welling up within me; and she rambled eagerly on and on, speaking with animation and vivacity, as one speaks to an old and amiable companion.

We must have strolled through the rambling thoroughfares for an hour, when we seated ourselves on a cushioned marble bench at one corner of a wide court. "If we stay here until dark," suggested Aelios, "you will see one of the most curious exhibitions that you have ever seen."

It seemed only a few minutes later when, without warning, the golden orbs above us flickered, grew dim, and flashed into blackness. Then, while I was wondering whether we were to be left in total gloom, other lights gleamed from the city's unseen pinnacles; and their rays darted in long streamers against a blank glass wall directly across from us, illuminating it with fantastic and unbelievable designs. Unlike the searchlights that had amazed me at the Pageant of the Good Destruction, these lights were not without apparent purpose; they shed definite patterns, I might almost say pictures, upon the broad glass screen. First one could make out the form of a man, life-sized and with pale-colored robes, moving in agile cinematograph fashion; then a woman or a child would advance across the screen to meet him; then the two would engage in various significant motions or gesticulations, to be joined perhaps by others; and in the swaying and blending of the lights, the weird mingling and intermingling of a myriad shades and colors, the background of shadows and the foreground of lithe and active figures, I realized that I was witnessing the representation of scenes from Atlantean life!

What those scenes were I cannot recall. But I have the impression that they aimed to present life symbolically rather than literally; that beauty was their purpose rather than accuracy, and that a pleasing harmony of color, tone and proportion was deemed more important than a stringent realism. I fear that I was not sufficiently advanced in the native art to appreciate them, for they left little more effect upon my mind than an exhibition of mere technique with the violin or piano would leave upon one untrained in music.

But, at the time, the spectacle certainly did have its influence. Although vaguely aware that the seats about me were being silently occupied, I could scarcely give a thought to my surroundings; and under the enchantment of the shifting and pictorial lights, I felt as if Aelios and I were alone together; and I pressed close to her, until not a fraction of an inch divided us and it seemed that we breathed not as two persons but as one. Very cautiously, as though it were a clandestine and forbidden act, I reached out my hand till it touched hers and the palm closed softly over her fingers. She did not return the pressure and yet did not withdraw her hand, nor even seem to notice what I was doing; and, in my confusion, I scarcely knew whether to feel encouraged or repulsed.

Then, by that wavering and uncertain light, I caught a glimpse of her eyes. They were bright and shining—and did they merely reflect her joy at the colored display? Not a word was spoken between us, nor was

I anxious that a word be spoken; I had sudden visions of a tomorrow fairer than I would once have dared to hope for.

CHAPTER XX

Farm and Factory

EARLY the following morning we were again under way. Leaving Thalos through a little arched gateway under the western wall, we trudged for several hours through flat green countryside. Here and there, amid breaks in the vegetation, we observed edifices which my companions described as "farm-houses," but which, with their statue-lined walls and marble columns, seemed to me to be little less than palaces. These remarkable dwellings, of which there must have been four or five to every square mile, were conspicuous from a distance, for there were no obscuring trees, and the landscape was dominated by a hardy reed that grew shoulder-high in impenetrable clusters.

Except for the size of this plant, I might have fancied it to be a variety of wheat. Not only were its leaves long and grass-like, but it bore a rich crop of some grain that closely resembled wheat, although each of the seed-clusters were large as ears of Indian corn. That it was cultivated for food purposes was obvious, for brilliant white lamps were beaming from the tinted columns as in the fruit-jungles, and at regular intervals we passed irrigation ditches, and now and then caught glimpses of gray-clad men at work amid the green thickets.

But while this scenery was fairly interesting, it was on the whole the most monotonous I had yet viewed in Atlantis. Hence I was relieved when the landscape showed a sudden change, and the cultivated plains gave way to a series of long, low, grass-covered hills. From the beginning, I noticed something peculiar about these eminences, for their contours were rounded with almost geometrical evenness; while beyond the furthest heights, a clear, rapid stream flowed out of the ground as if forced up from nowhere, and, after meandering to the edge of the reed-covered plain, divided into half a dozen diverging irrigation canals. But all this was less surprising than what I next observed; for as I stood staring at the stream in wonder, a huge rock at the base of the nearest hill thrust itself outward, and a man emerged as if from the center of the earth!

Startled, I turned to my companions for an explanation—but not a murmur issued from them, and their faces showed none of that amazement I might have expected. "Here is where we enter," declared one of the tutors, in matter-of-fact tones; and followed by the rest of the party, he plunged through the aperture made by the dislodged boulder.

Like one in a dream—or rather like one in a nightmare—I trailed with the others into that hole on the hillside. As I approached the entrance, I found that what I had taken to be a rock was not a rock at all, but merely a cleverly disguised bit of metal; upon reaching the doorway, I was amazed to find, instead of the tunnel-like corridor I had expected, a spacious and wide-vaulting hall.

With the exception of the Sunken World itself it was the largest enclosure I had ever entered; indeed, it occupied the entire interior of the hill. Along the full length of a half mile gallery the white-lustered ceiling arched to a height of two hundred feet; and on each side of a broad passageway, rising almost to meet the ceiling, was a series of what I took to be gigantic boilers. All of these were connected with innumerable wires and with pipes thicker than a man's body, while at the further end of the gallery the tubes were interwoven in intricate loops, coils and convolutions like the exposed entrails of a Titan.

As I stepped through the doorway, a warm breeze swept my face, bearing to my nostrils the odor of oil, and at the same time bringing me reminders of the furnace-dry air of steam-heated apartments. "What place is this?" I could not forebear to ask; but almost instantly I was sorry that I had spoken, for four or five pairs of eyes were turned upon me in surprise at so obvious a question.

"This is a distillery, of course," answered one of my young companions.

"A distillery?" I echoed, scarcely less astonished at his words than at the extraordinary appearance of the place. And although the Atlanteans had seemed to me to be a sober people, I had visions of the manufacture of intoxicants on a scale inconceivable to the most bibulous of my own countrymen.

"Yes, this is where we prepare our distilled water," continued my friend, surprised at my surprise.

FOR a moment I merely stared at him without comprehension. "But why so much distilled water?" was all that I could gasp.

"That's easily explained," said the young man, with a smile. "The water piped from our deep wells, which serves us for drinking purposes, couldn't begin to take care of our irrigation problems—and without irrigation Atlantis would be a desert. The Salty River, of course, contains enough for all our needs; but it is ocean water, and the brine would kill all land vegetation. And so the only possibility was to distill the water. This was arranged for long ago by Agripides, when he built this distillery and eleven others, which together keep the irrigation system of Atlantis supplied, and incidentally provide us with all the salt required for domestic and chemical purposes."

"That may be all very well," I remarked, "but the amount of heat necessary to evaporate so much water must be tremendous. . . ."

"That is no problem at all," my companion assured me. "By means of intra-atomic energy, we could generate power enough to distill the entire ocean."

I felt certain that this statement was an exaggeration, but before I had had time for comment, my attention was suddenly diverted. All of our party had paused before a circular slit in the floor; and a brown-clad workman, stepping forth from amid the boilers, applied a key to a little hole near the edge of the slit, and removed a steel disk perhaps five feet in diameter.

Instantly we were bathed in a brilliant copper light, so dazzling that at first I had to turn abruptly away. Then as my startled eyes gradually accustomed themselves to the vivid illumination, I peered through a glass partition far down into what remotely reminded me of a furnace, except that no flames were visible, but from the vague fire-bright background great sheets and rods of a shining red or a blinding brassy yellow stared at me steadily with unbearable incandescence.

"Those are the intra-atomic generators," explained the workmen. "They are constantly liberating energy, which is transformed into electrical power by means of giant induction coils; and it is this electricity which is wired to the boiler-room below and heats the water from the Salty River."

"But how terrible to work down there!" it occurred to me to comment. "How can any man—"

"It is not necessary to work down there," I was promptly informed. "The generators continue operat-

ing automatically so long as they are supplied with fuel."

"What fuel do you use?" I inquired.

The reply was not at all what I had expected. "Any of the heavier metals will do," stated the workman. "One of the best of the cheaper fuels is gold, for its high atomic weight makes possible extensive dissociation. Sometimes, however, we use silver, platinum, or lead—although the latter is ordinarily regarded as too valuable for such purposes. A supply of lead will run the generator for twenty-seven years, one of silver for thirty-three, and one of gold for forty-five. When new fuel is required, we simply shoot it in through the tube over there." And the speaker pointed to a tube of about the thickness of a man's wrist, which projected several feet above the floor between two of the boilers.

I thought that I had now seen enough of the distillery, and was not disappointed when my companions made ready to leave. But there was one problem which still troubled me: why did the building look so much like a hill from without, and why had such evident pains been taken to conceal its existence?

To these questions I found a speedy answer. "If this edifice had been erected in the days before Agripides," declared one of my young friends, "it would have been nothing more than an ugly mass of steel and stone. But Agripides, seeking a way to beautify the structure and hide its unavoidable defects, hit upon the plan of covering it with a coating of earth and sowing the earth with grass, so as to give the appearance of a green hill. All our factories, you will find, have in some such way been concealed or made beautiful."

This, indeed, I discovered to be the case. We had now reached the industrial center of Atlantis; and all the rest of that day we were busy inspecting manufacturing plants of sundry kinds and sizes. But nowhere was the air clouded with that smoke and dust which I had come to associate with industrial districts in my own land; nowhere was there a dingy or soot-blackened building, nowhere were my ears assaulted by the shrieking or droning of whistles, or by the hammering, pounding, screeching, whirring or grating of machines. Instead, we passed through a region that might have been recommended to sufferers from nervous ailments. In the midst of pleasant, grassy lands an occasional tree-bordered building arose with glittering steeples or stainless marble facade or august columns of granite; and within each building, which one might have mistaken for a mansion or a temple, electrically driven wheels and levers would be operating noiselessly, preparing the food of the Atlanteans or weaving their clothes from the fibre of a flax-like plant, manufacturing farm implements or fertilizers or scientific articles or household wares; and in each of these factories a few workers (never more than a score) would be calmly and often smilingly tending the machines, occupying thus their two or three hours of assigned daily service for the State.

THE institution that interested me most was the building where chemists were at work renewing the air supply of Atlantis—or, rather, the oxygen supply. Here, in a long hall dominated by great vats connected by pipes and wires reminding me vaguely of the distillery, a continual stream of water was being disintegrated by a process of electrolysis, the hydrogen being diverted to enter into various chemical compounds, with carbon nitrogen and other elements, the oxygen being released into the atmosphere to replace that consumed by respiration and combustion. By means of the air-gauge, a finely adjusted apparatus whose index was a flame that varied in intensity with the amount of oxygen, chemists were able to determine how much of this vital gas was required at any specific time; but some oxygen had to be provided continually, for, large as Atlantis was, it was not so great that nature would preserve a balance and replace the oxygen that was consumed by that freed in the course of organic processes of plant life.

But if the Atlantean industries were arranged with a regard for the welfare and esthetic sensibilities of the people as a whole, scarcely less pains had been taken to insure the health and convenience of the workers. I will not speak of the safety devices, which had been so perfected that accidents were virtually unknown; I will not dwell upon the precautions to vary the monotony even of the two- or three-hour working day, to make possible individual initiative, to guard against fatigue and excessive strain, or to render the surroundings pleasant to the eye and mind. But what I must mention, because it impressed me as unique, is the fact that the workers were housed in dwellings not less imposing than the most stately city homes. The road took us through half a dozen villages reserved for the factory workers; and each of these seemed to be in itself a work of art, with many-columned residences, arches and marble portals and connecting colonnades, flowered parks and statuary and fountains, all co-ordinated in a tasteful and elegant design.

CHAPTER XXI
The Wall and the Wind-makers

THAT evening we were lodged in the city of Arvon, a moderately large town which differed strikingly from anything we had yet seen. Its scattered houses were huddled amid vegetation so thick that from a distance it resembled a forest; and even at close range one could not lose sight of its sylvan aspect, since all the buildings were vine-covered and painted a green and brown that harmonized ideally with the woodland colors.

But I must not devote too much space to the strange appearance of this town—still stranger sights were to greet me on the following day. For then I was to reach a turning-point in my journey, and to penetrate some of the salient mysteries of Atlantis.

Even though I did not know what interesting discoveries were before me, I had a hint of something unusual very early in the morning. We had hardly left Arvon when I observed that the golden-lighted dome seemed lower and nearer than usual, and curved gradually down to westward until it appeared to merge with the ground.

"There's where the glass wall begins," said one of the tutors, pointing; and I looked eagerly, hopeful that we would soon reach the wall itself.

A little further on, the road curved abruptly southward, and for several miles we merely paralleled the wall. Then, to my joy, a familiar gurgling met my ears—we were back again near the Salty River. Straight across the stream we passed on an arching bridge dominated by a crystalline pale-blue colonnade; and, on the further side, we again turned westward, and followed the river directly toward the green glass wall.

As we advanced, I noticed that the waters were becoming white and foamy, with great briny patches as if a passing steamer had churned up the waves. Gradually these frothy expanses grew wilder and more conspicuous, until the entire river was a seething, effervescent mass; and troubled waves sprang to life, with

turbulence that increased as we moved upstream, until the bubbling white was mingled with the green and gray of leaping surges, and the waters were agitated as if by a storm-wind. Yet only the faintest breeze was blowing, and I could not understand the source of the strange commotion.

At the same time, a disquieting sound came to my ears—the continuous and droning sound of thunder, dull and muffled but gradually growing louder in spite of the clamoring and roaring of the waves. So deep-toned and voluminous was it that it reminded me of a din I never expected to hear again—the booming of the ocean along resisting shores.

All of our party moved without a word now, moved rapidly and with faces straining westward, as if eager for some rare and long-awaited event. In their very speechlessness there was a contagious tension; and, responsive to their mood, I too was expectant, though I could not imagine what there was to be anticipated.

But I did not have long to wait. "Look! There it is!" exclaimed one of the party, suddenly. And he paused, and pointed straight ahead; and all his companions paused and pointed straight ahead, joining in his awed cries of "Look! There it is!"

Of course, I strained my eyes quite as earnestly as any of them. But at first I saw nothing to impress me. All that was visible was a broad sheet of white looming just above the river for almost its full width, as though there were a falls a mile or two upstream. And, in my ignorance, I accepted this as the explanation.

But I was speedily to discover my error. Suddenly the path bent away from the river at an acute angle; and as we followed our new course the distant thundering grew louder—while a cold wind began to sweep over us and the supposed waterfall took on unexpected dimensions. By degrees it lengthened until it seemed a long jet of water shot horizontally out of some colossal hose. Intensely white, with the whiteness of foam and edges blurred with spray, it went hurtling with the impetuousity and swiftness of an arrow from the nozzle of a gigantic pipe, plunging outward hundreds of yards in a graceful parabola and giving rise to the Salty River.

Almost as remarkable as this torrent of water was the tube from which it was discharged. This great pipe, which may have been of a steel alloy, was well over a mile long, and was a hundred yards across at the opening; but it narrowed gradually as it crept westward along the ground and disappeared where the green horizon met the earth.

Needless to say, I did not have to inquire as to the meaning. Only one explanation was conceivable: the metallic tube was the valve through which the X-111 had found entrance to Atlantis, the valve that admitted the ocean water and kept the Salty River supplied. The aperture at the ocean end was doubtless not very wide (I was later told that it was but twenty-five feet across); but such was the pressure at these depths that the waters burst through with the force and swiftness and tremendous volume I had observed, and had to be diverted through a long and gradually widening tube before their torrents could be controlled and safely emptied into the river channel.

AS we approached the glass wall, the hoarse and resonant roaring was continuously in our ears, thudding and crashing with echoes that reverberated like the combined monody of a hundred Niagaras. But, forgetful of the tumult, I kept my eyes fastened straight ahead, where the great green dome sloped down to meet the ground in a curve modelled on that of the actual heavens. Except for the dark weird coloration, I might have fancied that I was staring toward an actual horizon on earth; and so close was the resemblance that the illusion persisted until I was almost within a stone's throw of the barrier. Only then could I persuade myself that I actually beheld a solid mass; and, even so, the curvature was so graceful and so elusive that I could not feel that a mere wall stretched before me; but, rather, I had the sense that it was some ultimate boundary, the dividing line between reality and infinite nothingness.

This impression was confirmed by the fact that the wall at close range looked opaque. Olive-green and of impenetrable thickness, it seemed impervious to the rays of light; though, remembering my experiences on the X-111, I knew that it was really transparent.

All the members of our party approached the wall almost breathlessly, then held out their hands and touched it in silence—a procedure which may have had some ceremonial importance, or may have been akin to the actions of persons who, seeing the ocean for the first time, gravely dip their hands in the salt water. At any rate, I lost no time in following their example, and found that the surface of the wall was just as I had expected—smooth and polished, and of a substance that would have been apparent to a blind man.

After the twenty students had duly inspected the wall, one of the tutors lifted his voice so as to be heard by the entire party.

"My friends," said he, "we have now reached the border-land between Atlantis and the outside world. A rim of glass fifty feet thick divides us from the ocean; and that glass, as you know, is composed of dozens of layers, one above the other, several of them strengthened with interwoven strands of fine wire, and all composed of a special pressure-resisting glass devised at the orders of Agripides. You understand, of course, that the wall does not end where you see it, but penetrates five hundred feet underground, lest the ocean overwhelm us from beneath; you also understand that the glass is ribbed with steel, which holds it together in a sort of latticed framework, with girders, beams and stanchions at measured intervals like the metallic skeleton of a great building.

"The erection of the wall represents the supreme accomplishment of Atlantean engineering, and required the labor of thirty thousand men for thirty-four years. But Agripides, with his usual foresight, planned it so, that the work, once done, would never require renewal, for glass is one of the most durable of substances, and is virtually immune to dissolution by the ocean waters. We have our immersible vessels, of course, which regularly range the seas around the glass dome in search of any possible fault or fissure; but no serious damage has ever yet been discovered, and it is safe to say that the present edifice will serve us and our descendants for a hundred thousand generations."

The speaker paused, as if for effect; then, noting that his audience remained silent, he concluded, "Is there anyone that would like to ask a question?"

"Yes, I would," I surprised myself by saying.

All eyes were bent curiously upon me, and I was forced to continue, "Glass is, as you say, an exceedingly durable substance, but it is also extremely fragile. Is there no possibility that the wall will ever be cracked?"

"Cracked?" echoed the tutor, with a surprised smile. "Do you think that, if there had been such a possibility, Atlantis would not have been inundated long ago? Granted, if any very heavy object were to col-

lide with the wall, it might be broken and we would be flooded out like ants. But how could there be any such heavy object here in the deep sea Certainly, the fishes couldn't break through."

"No, of course not," I conceded, feeling that I had made myself ridiculous—and with that the discussion ended. But my words were often to be recalled to me in the tempestuous days that followed; and more than one of my hearers was to speak of them as strangely prophetic.

For the next hour we followed a little path that clung close to the glass wall. And, as we proceeded, my impression of its opaqueness was dissipated, for from time to time a little flickering light was momentarily visible beyond the green thicknesses; and I had disturbing remembrances of the lantern-bearing fishes that had haunted us on our way to Atlantis.

We had covered not more than a mile or two when we met with a new surprise. A brisk breeze began to blow over us; and the further we walked the sharper the breeze grew, until it assumed the fury of a gale, and for the first time since reaching Atlantis I felt cold, almost as if I were back on earth. Why we continued in the face of this strange blast I could not understand, nor whence it proceeded nor how it had been produced. But while I was wondering and fighting my way through the wind, a singular whirring sound came to my ears, a buzzing as of gigantic flies; and gradually that sound grew louder, until from resembling the murmuring of insects it came to remind me of the flapping of colossal wings. That this noise was somehow connected with the quickening wind was apparent from the first; and the relationship became evident when the path swerved abruptly away from the wall and I glanced back, to behold a series of queer-looking machines supported on stone pedestals high up against the glass. It would be impossible to say just what the machines were like, for they were in such rapid motion that the parts were not visible; but there were six or eight of them, and they were round, and probably each a hundred yards across; and so swiftly were they rotating that they formed each a gray blur through which the green of the wall was vaguely discernible.

"Those are the electro-intra-atomic wind generators," explained one of the tutors. "By means of these great fans and others like them stationed at various points around the wall, the atmosphere of Atlantis is kept in constant circulation. Without them the air would be stagnant and the climate sultry and unhealthy. These generators are in action at all times, with great air-wheels that make from ten to fifteen revolutions a second; and it is estimated that the daily energy consumed by each of them would be sufficient to boil a thousand tons of ice water."

We did not linger long in the vicinity of the great fans, for the strong wind was most annoying and the temperature too low for comfort. But we set out at a brisk pace across a moss-covered plain away from the wall; and we did not pause again until we had reached the city of Lerenon, which was our destination for the day.

This town, which was located some miles from the wall and yet was constantly fanned by cool breezes from the wind generators, had one striking feature all its own: it was dominated by two colossal bronze figures, one of a man, the other of a woman, which reached far above the city domes and towers halfway to the green-glass sky. Both these statues were carved with an irresistible majesty, the man's face that of an Apollo, the woman's that of a Diana; and their right hands were extended high over the city roofs and joined in a firm clasp, so lifelike that I might almost have expected them to move and speak. At first I thought that they represented mythological characters, but an inscription at their base informed me of my error, for the man was meant to typify Wisdom, and the woman Beauty; and in their union above the spires and columns of Atlantis I thought I could read the meaning and purpose of the entire land.

CHAPTER XXII

The Journey Ends

DURING the thirty days of our journey, I was the witness of marvels so numerous that, if I were to dwell upon them all, I might fill hundreds of pages. Yet while there is much that cannot be recorded and much that I have forgotten, there are some observations which have stamped themselves indelibly upon my memory, and which are so essential for an understanding of Atlantis that I could not well overlook them.

Thus, I found that the wall enclosing the country formed a vast circle, of a diameter impossible to determine precisely but probably in the neighborhood of two hundred miles. Thus, also, I learned that the glass roof was at an average height of five hundred feet above the ground, although the distance varied greatly according to the level of the land; and I discovered that it was everywhere supported by myriads of the huge tinted columns—columns with steel interiors and surface of concrete or stone. I ascertained, likewise, that the Salty River followed an absolutely unbending course, flowing in a straight-line and on an even, gradual grade from the western wall of Atlantis to the eastern (since it was really a canal rather than a river); and I was amazed and dazzled at sight of the great intra-atomic pumps which forced the torrents back into the sea.

Since they were expected to overcome a pressure of many tons to the square foot, these pumps had to be very powerful; and powerful they were, with their labyrinths of levers and revolving chains, and three-hundred-foot pistons and rods that pounded against the waters like gigantic pile-drivers, pressing them slowly back into the sea to the accompaniment of a roaring and thundering that could be heard for miles and that proved deafening upon close approach.

The cities of Atlantis, according to the count I made, were eighteen in number (exclusive of the smaller towns and villages). But an Atlantean city, although always occupying considerable space, was what we in America should scarcely regard as a city at all, since it never had more than twenty or twenty-five thousand inhabitants. This insignificant population, when considered along with the liberal amount of territory allotted each town, accounted for the fact that no great crowds were ever to be seen on the streets; and it also explained how it was possible for efficient popular assemblages to debate and decide public questions.

But the surprising fact about the Atlantean cities was not so much their small population as their almost unbelievable variety. No town in Atlantis was like any other town; the only characteristic possessed by them all in common was their unfailing beauty. To give some idea of their amazing diversity, I might mention the city of Atolis, which, when seen from the hill that surmounted it, formed a definite pattern, resembling some colossal Grecian temple of which the streets and avenues were the columns. Or I might picture Aedla, which was built along a series of canals connecting with the Salty River, with a lake in the

center, giving a Venetian effect, except that the palaces were more exquisitely designed than any in the upper world. Then, again, I might depict the small town of Acropolon, in which all the houses were connected in an enormous colonnaded quadrangle surrounding a vividly flowering park, reminding me of some university I had seen long before; or I might launch into a lengthy description of Mangona, another small town, whose houses were all roofless and collapsible, and were generally taken down during the day and put into place only at night or when the inhabitants desired seclusion.

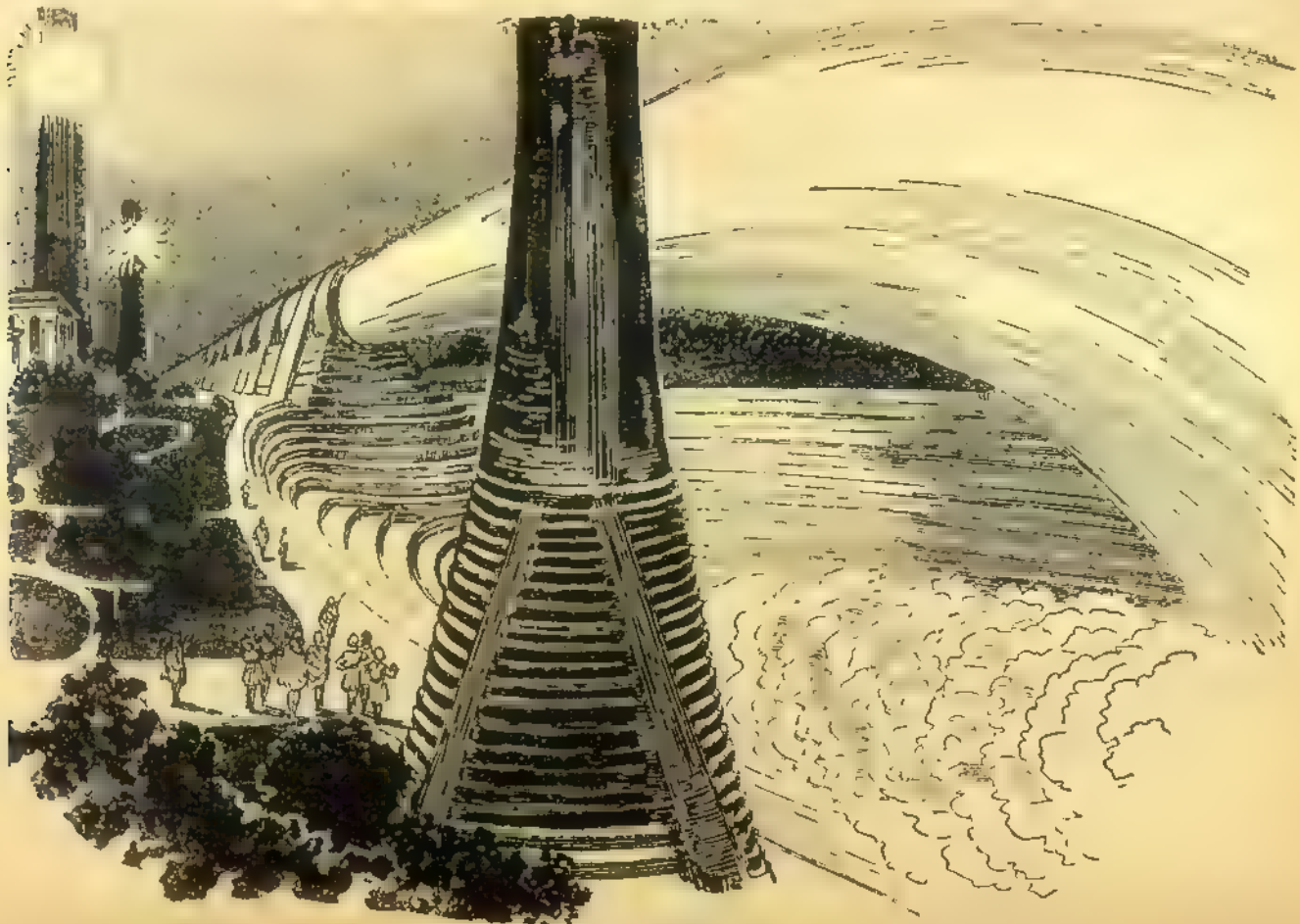
But more interesting to me than any of these was Sardolos, one of the few present-day Atlantean cities that had existed before the Submergence. Although of course the town was not the same as in ancient times, and although its gracefully winding thoroughfares and marble friezes and frescoed domes represented the work of modern artists, yet some relics of the old days had been carefully preserved.

In one corner of the city, concealed from the general gaze in a statue-lined bronze enclosure, were the remains of buildings said to date from the second century B. S. Yet, ancient as these ruins were, my first impression was that there was something familiar about them. The most conspicuous exhibit was a stone wall, five stories high and with gaping rectangular holes where the windows had been; and to the rear was a mass of rusted and distorted steel, reaching the full height of the wall with twisted, spidery arms that had once lent it support.

"A splendid specimen of pre-Submergence architecture," stated a placard placed prominently before the exhibit. "This was the seat of the Stock Market of old Sardolos—a wholesale gambling house abolished by the Anti-Corruption Act of the first century A. S. The mass of shapeless and desiccated stone opposite is all that remains of the Inter-Atlantean Bank, which owned a controlling share in this gambling resort; while just to the right were the ruins of the shrine in which the owners of the bank worshipped, and of the clubhouse in which, late in the second century B. S., they convened in the interest of their lotteries, and decided to declare the fifth Atlanto-Bengenese war."

BUT when I looked to see the ruins, all that I beheld was a series of irregular stone walls, not over two or three feet high and brown with the lifeless parchment hue of extreme age. Somehow, it made me uncomfortable to look upon these vestiges of the past; nor was I relieved when I gazed at a picture of Sardolos as it had been, and saw two long opposing rows of geometrically regular five-story buildings. To think of these, and then to turn to present-day Atlantis, was merely to shudder at the contrast; yet all the while I could not repress the sense that I was standing in the presence of something undefinably familiar.

If it was somewhat irritating to gaze at the ruins of Sardolos, the disagreeable moments were few indeed during the thirty days of the journey. All in all, I have rarely taken part in so thoroughly delightful an expedition; and my joy in the trip is not to be explained merely by the engrossing sights of Atlantis, nor by the companionship of the twenty enthusiastic, friendly young students, but rather by the presence of one who meant more to me than all else that Atlantis contained. My opportunities of speaking with Aelios were not plentiful, for she seemed always to be engaged in conversation with some member of the party; but occasionally I exchanged a few words with her,



. . By degrees it lengthened until it seemed a long jet of water shot horizontally out of some colossal hose. Intensely white, with the white-[illegible] of foam and edges blurred with spray, it went hurtling with the impetuosity and swiftness of an arrow from the nozzle of a gigantic pipe, plunging outward hundreds of yards in a graceful parabola and giving rise to the River.

and occasionally she darted a bright smile in my direction, thereby reassuring me when at times I gave way to disturbing doubts.

It was not until our travels were drawing to a close that I had another intimate talk with her. The morning of the thirtieth day had arrived, and we had set out through wide fields of the wheat-like reed toward the city of Archeon, which we hoped to reach shortly after noon. But, absorbed in somber contemplation, I took no part in the merriment of my companions, and almost from the first I lagged moodily behind them. Hence it was a relief to hear light footsteps suddenly at my side, and to find a flaxen-curled head nodding a greeting and a pair of kindly bright blue eyes peering at me inquiringly.

"Aelios!" I exclaimed. And I returned her greeting in terms that could not half express my pleasure.

She wasted no time about plunging into the subject that had brought her to me. "Today our journey ends," she reminded me, almost regretfully. "And tomorrow you must take up your duties as a citizen. You may find matters a little strange at first. Perhaps there are already some things that puzzle you."

"Indeed there are," I admitted. "I really have very little idea what I am expected to do."

"Oh, but you must have some idea!" she remonstrated. "Why, haven't you been appointed Historian of the Upper World?"

"Yes, that is so," I murmured.

"Then you must set out at once upon your duties. In work such as yours, no record will be taken of the hours you employ, but you have a moral obligation to work not less than two hours a day."

"That doesn't seem excessive," I stated, with a smile.

"Yes, but remember you have also an obligation to do some work on your own account for the State. And things won't be any easier, if, as you say, you will combine your assigned and chosen work."

"The real problem," I acknowledge hesitatingly, "is that I don't know the language well enough to write a history."

Aelios frowned disapprovingly. "Oh, but you have already a good speaking command of Atlantean," she pointed out. "And with practice you should be able to write passably well. Meanwhile I'd advise you to go to the government library, and read up all you can to familiarize yourself with our language—and with our life."

I thanked Aelios for the suggestion, and promised to visit the library at the first opportunity.

"But don't forget that mere working and studying won't be enough," she continued. "I hope you'll make friends of many of our people, and participate in our intellectual contests and recreations. You might even join one of the political parties."

"Political parties?" I repeated. "I didn't know there were any parties in Atlantis."

"Oh, yes, of course there are," she quickly returned. "There are always several parties to present their opinions at the Hall of Public Enlightenment."

"What parties are those?" I inquired.

"Well, let's see," she enumerated, reflectively. "First of all, there's the Party of Submergence, so-called because it was founded by Agripides and has been the ruling group ever since the Good Destruction. Then there is the Industrial Reform Party, which contends that all machines and in particular intra-atomic engines are incongruous in Atlantis and should be reduced to a minimum far below the present number. Then, again, there is the Party of Artistic Emancipation, which is really literary rather than political, and appeals for freedom in art. Also, there is the Party of Birth Extension, which maintains that the government should relax its restrictions on population. And, finally, enlarging the principles of the Birth Extension Party, there is the Party of Emergence, which is the smallest of them all and has always been highly unpopular if not actually despised, since it holds that we should renounce the principles of Agripides, enter into communication with the upper world, and send our excess population to live above seas."

"That sounds quite interesting," I commented, for the Party of Emergence seemed to me to be the most understandable of the group. "But you say this last party has never had much success?"

"Fortunately not. Its members have always been looked down upon as anti-social agitators, for they have transgressed against that fundamental principle, 'Atlantis for the Atlanteans.' Few self-respecting citizens have ever lent them support, and they have never been powerful enough to carry any of their proposals."

"Too bad," I found myself remarking, with unguarded frankness; and the shocked expression on Aelios' face showed me how I had erred.

"At any rate, now that you know something about the parties, you will be better able to choose among them," she concluded.

I assured her that I would choose as best I could.

"If there's ever anything you're in doubt about," she urged, "don't be afraid to ask me. I know that things aren't easy here for you, a stranger from a strange land, and I'd like to help if I could."

I thanked her fervently, and declared that I should not hesitate to consult her should occasion arise. And secretly I was determined that the occasion should arise.

"I'm glad to hear you say that," she returned. And her eyes shone with a bright light, and her lips quivered sympathetically, and her whole face radiated kindliness and warmth.

But at this juncture she saw fit to give the interview an impersonal turn. "See, over there!" she exclaimed, pointing through a break in the dense green foliage. "Those are the towers of Archeon!"

I looked eagerly, and far across the plain I beheld a minute glittering spire, more than half obscured by the intervening array of tinted columns—the first sign of that city which I was this day to enter, and where I was to make my home, and seek the fulfillment of my love, and undertake my duties as a citizen of the Sunken World.

CHAPTER XXIII

Xanocles

AS an accredited citizen of Atlantis, I was assigned to permanent lodgings immediately after returning to Archeon. The housing representative of the Atlantean government (the only substitute in the Sunken World for our "realtors") accompanied me on a leisurely tour of the city, allowing me my choice of not less than fifteen or twenty apartments. The task of selection was by no means easy, not because it was hard to secure suitable quarters but because it was difficult to choose among so many desirable places. Never before had I realized how utterly superior the Atlantean homes were to our own—out of all the houses I visited, there was not one that was not separated by wide spaces from its neighbors, or that did not enjoy a full share of air and light, or that did not look comfortable and alluring. The grim and musty interiors of many of our own dwellings, the

furniture-littered rooms, the glaring bad taste of gilt and tinsel chairs and adornments, found no parallel among the Atlantean residences I visited. Instead, each apartment was so artlessly inviting that I might have claimed it at once as my home.

The distinguishing feature of most of the Atlantean houses was a central court that reminded me of the dwellings of the ancient world. Usually the court was square or rectangular in shape, though in some instances it was hexagonal or round; and more often than not it was completely enclosed. Some of the courts were surrounded by stalwart columns, but the majority were plain. Some had walls of granite, some of marble, some of a peculiar bluish stone that I could not recognize; some were marked by spangled fountains, some by flower-gardens, some by swimming pools; and the most distinctive of all was arranged as an art gallery, with a dominating statue in the center and paintings hung at intervals along the sides. But whatever the particular contents of the court, it was certain to be accessible by four or five doors leading into the several apartments.

After inspecting the various prospective lodgings, I finally decided in favor of a little three-room suite (three rooms, that is, in addition to the sleeping chamber on the roof) which looked out over a tree-lined expanse toward the sapphire dome of the Hall of Public Enlightenment. I was urged to take these quarters largely because of the fascination of the frieze-lined adjourning court, whose finely modelled images of gods and nymphs and satyrs offered me a prospect of fruitful study. But I was also captivated by the rooms themselves, which gave a bizarre effect with their walls decked with seaweed tapestries, and which seemed at once like a home and a temple with their high vaulted ceilings, their arching doorways and great elliptical windows, and their removable partitions capable of transforming the entire apartment into a single good-sized hall.

IT was fortunate perhaps that I chose these particular lodgings, for otherwise I might never have known Xanocles. Xanocles was to be my one intimate among all the men of Atlantis. It so happened that he —that fiery spirit, audacious thinker, and trustworthy friend—had chosen his abode in the same building; and it also happened (since fate works in inscrutable ways even in Atlantis) that he and I were early thrown together. It was, indeed, on the very day after my return to Archeon that Xanocles and I met. I had just settled in my new home, and had gone out into the court for my first close inspection of its mural decorations, when a door across from me slid open and a tall, white-clad figure emerged. A single glance would have told me that the stranger was exceptional, and a single glance perhaps told him that I was exceptional in Atlantis: for he paused in startled surprise, and for an embarrassed instant we stood staring inquiringly at one another. In that first fleeting glimpse I had an impression of a powerful personality; a large head poised squarely over a pair of broad and capable shoulders; two vivid blue eyes deeply set beneath a massive brow; a beardless oval face dominated by flowing chestnut locks; classic features, with chin and nose consummately modelled. But I did not notice then what I was often to observe later: the ironic glitter in the alert eyes, the forceful and determined lines into which the face would habitually settle, the air of overflowing vigor tempered by an easy self-command. Judging from the smooth contours of the man's face, I took him to be not over thirty years of age; and I was later much surprised to learn that he was well past forty (since in Atlantis people do not age so rapidly as on earth).

"By Agripides! You must be one of those visitors from up above!" exclaimed the newcomer, recovering from his astonishment. And he approached me with a winning smile, and held out both hands by way of greeting. "My name is Xanocles. We seem to be neighbors, you and I. Perhaps we can get to know each other."

"I hope we shall," I seconded, as I took his hands. "My name is Harkness. I've just finished my tour around Atlantis, and now I'm supposed to begin duty as a citizen."

"That's quick work," nodded Xanocles, approvingly. And then, after an instant's pause, "So you're the one they've appointed Historian of the Upper World?"

I pleaded guilty to the accusation.

"I knew it must be so," explained my new acquaintance, "because only one of the immigrants has been admitted to citizenship. Of course, there will be others later on."

"Won't you come in?" I invited, with a gesture toward my new apartments.

Xanocles needed no second invitation. A minute later we were seated opposite one another on seaweed cushions in the little room that was to be my study.

"It seems to me, Harkness," he suggested, using my name as familiarly as though he had known me all my life, "we might as well be frank with one another from the beginning. At least, I might as well be frank with you. And I'd better start by warning you that you'll not gain much from acquaintance with me. I'm none too popular."

"No?" I demanded, wondering vaguely what offense he had committed.

"No," he confessed. "I'm so very unpopular, in fact, that it may reflect upon you even to be seen in my company."

"But what is it that you've done?" I asked, thinking it strange that this attractive and able-looking man should be so disliked. "Surely, you haven't blown up a building, or stolen some one's jewels, or killed a man—"

A frown of disgust passed across Xanocles' face. "Such primitive forms of violence," he reminded me, "are unknown in Atlantis. No, I haven't stooped to anything so low. But I've done something bad enough in the eyes of the people."

"I'll have to give it up," said I, growing more puzzled each moment.

"It shouldn't be hard to guess—not if you know the ways of Atlantis," he continued, gravely. "I've joined the Party of Emergence."

"The Party of Emergence?" I exclaimed, remembering what Aelios had told me of this minority group.

"I not only joined the party," he acknowledged, completing the indictment, "but I've let them elect me one of their Debating Delegates."

"But I don't exactly understand—" I admitted, hesitatingly.

"You would understand if you knew more about Atlantis. Every people has to have its pet aversion, I suppose, and our pet aversion down here is the Emergence Party. That's because it opposes the principles of the one hundred per cent Atlanteans."

"But just what is the Emergence Party?" I inquired, still in doubt as to the tenets of this detested faction. "Is it anything so terrible?"

"That all depends upon the point of view," declared Xanocles, enigmatically.

He paused long enough to give me an instant's scrutiny with keen and quizzical eyes. "I am not sure

that you would understand," he decided, speaking as much to himself as to me. "But the main thing is that we oppose the compulsory limitation of population."

"Compulsory limitation of population?" I repeated, wondering if I had heard him correctly.

"Most certainly. You've heard, perhaps, that our population is limited by law to five hundred thousand."

"But that's impossible!" I cried, incredulously.

"Experience has proved quite the contrary," he dissented.

FOR a moment I did not reply. I merely sat staring at my companion, trying to fathom the secret hidden in those inscrutable grave eyes of his. And though he gave no sign of not being utterly truthful, I ended by giving expression to my scepticism.

"What do you do with your extra inhabitants? Do they emigrate to the center of the earth? Or do you prefer to shoot them or drown them, or perhaps to asphyxiate them humanely?"

"There are no extra inhabitants," was the surprising reply. "Do you know nothing of the Milares Compulsory Population Law?"

I was forced to confess my ignorance.

"Then let me enlighten you," volunteered Xanocles, with a tolerant smile. "First let me take you back a few thousand years, to the days just after the Submergence. At that time the population of Atlantis was several millions, and the swarms of our people were so dense that long hours of labor were necessary, living quarters were crowded and unsanitary, and there was little time for the creation or appreciation of beauty. This state of affairs endured for over a century, when, after much discussion, the Milares Compulsory Population Law was passed, and the citizenry was gradually reduced to its present satisfactory numbers."

"And what was the Milares Population Law?" I asked.

"It is the law that is still the backbone of our life. According to Milares, a great social philosopher of the second century A. S., the most important of public questions is that of parentage. He maintained that the parents of each generation might either poison or uplift the next; and all of his numerous pamphlets and books bore the warning that persons congenitally deficient in mind or physique should not be permitted to breed, while those of the higher physical and intellectual qualities should be encouraged.

"In pursuance of these views, Milares proposed a basic innovation in social customs; he recommended that the institution of marriage be dissevered from that of parenthood. In other words, while marriage —and likewise divorce—should be permitted to all that desired it, parenthood should become a subject of drastic state regulation: any young couple wishing children must have their fitness examined by a carefully selected State board. Since effective methods of birth control were known, this system was wholly practicable, and, in fact, has proved—"

"But what if the orders of the Board were disobeyed?" I interrupted. "Certainly, the unlawful newcomer couldn't be punished."

"Certainly not. But a stigma would attach to the parents—the stain of illegitimacy."

"You mean that the parents would be considered illegitimate?"

"Exactly. And the disgrace is so great that few persons have ever offended in that way. As a result, we have never at any time exceeded the prescribed population by more than ten or twelve thousands."

"Even so," I contended, rather vaguely, "it seems to me that such a system would be altogether too arbitrary to succeed."

"Yet it has succeeded splendidly. The experience of nearly three thousand years has vindicated it beyond dispute. Do you think that, at the time of the Submergence our men and women enjoyed such perfection of physical beauty as today? Or do you imagine that the intellectual and artistic types were then predominant? Far from it! Thousands upon thousands were sickly and stunted in body; a myriad were imbecilic, weak-minded or insane. But thanks to the rigidity of the selection, these types have been entirely eliminated; and, owing largely to the same cause, the average human life has been lengthened from the pre-Submergence figure of sixty-five years to a hundred and twenty—which means that the man of ability has a whole century of mature service to render instead of a mere four or five decades."

I had no choice except to admit that the results were marvelous. But at the same time I remembered a vital oversight in Xanocles' recitation. "All this tells me nothing of the Party of Emergence," I pointed out. "In fact, if the Milares Population Law has worked so successfully, I cannot understand why you should oppose it."

"It would not be strictly correct to say that we oppose it," he explained. "We recognize its beneficent results, but we believe that the time has come to modify it. Not that we would increase the population of Atlantis beyond the half million mark, for that would be to impose an intolerable burden upon us all; but we hold that many deserving persons are being deprived of parenthood, and that many more children of the highest quality might be born. To furnish a simple illustration, the Board seems to believe it unwise to perpetuate the radical strains, and so rules with suspicious frequency against members of the Party of Emergence."

"Then precisely what is it that your party advocates?" I questioned.

"Just what our name implies: to let our surplus population emerge into the upper world. That would be easily possible, for the submersible repair ships that range the ocean about the glass wall would be capable of conveying us above seas. Of course, there might be no possibility of a return, but a return would not be desirable: it would be enough to insure life for thousands of our unborn sons and daughters, and to remake the upper world by an infiltration of our superior blood and standards. "Besides,"—here Xanocles hesitated perceptibly—"there is another reason."

"What is that?" I felt bound to inquire.

Xanocles remained silent for a moment, staring abstractedly toward the romping fauns and mermaids on the seaweed tapestries of the opposite wall. Then slowly he resumed, "We hold—and in this we are violently combated by our friends of the Submergence Party—that there was one minor flaw in the plans of Agripides. In a thousand respects his projects were perfect; but we believe that in the thousandth and first he made an oversight—perhaps an unavoidable oversight. He did not leave room enough in Atlantis for adventure. Everything here is so well designed that there is little chance for daring courage, the unknown—little chance for sheer primitive rashness and hardihood. Our games and recreations, our art, our political contests, of course consume much of our surplus energy; but, after all, we are the children of savage ancestors, and among our young there is a craving for keener experience. And so we of the Emergence Party favor the increase of population, so that those who wish may enjoy the greatest ad-

venture of all—may launch their vessels toward unknown worlds!"

"You would find that adventure well worth taking," I commented.

"Then you—you perhaps agree with the Party of Emergence?" cried Xanocles, rising and coming toward me enthusiastically.

"Perhaps I do," I admitted, also rising, and taking his extended hands. And as I felt his hearty clasp, it seemed to me that I had not only gained a friend but found my political allegiance.

CHAPTER XXIV

What the Books Revealed

AMID all the excitement of my return to Archeon, my establishment in new quarters and my meeting with Xanocles, I had not forgotten Aelios' advice to visit the library at the first opportunity. Nor had I forgotten my official duties as Historian of the Upper World, nor the necessity for acquiring more explicit knowledge of undersea customs before I could hope to interpret my own country to the Atlanteans. Hence I was determined to accomplish a double object: to prepare myself for my prescribed work and at the same time to gratify my curiosity by an extensive course of reading.

As soon as I was fully settled in my new apartment, I set out for the main government library—and with highly interesting and even startling results. I found the building without difficulty: a many-domed edifice of granite and white chalcedony, located in a large flower-bordered square near the center of town. Had I not been able to identify it from the descriptions, I might have recognized it by the streams of people constantly filing in and out, giving me the feeling that it was the business heart of the city.

Yet my first impressions of the library were bewildering in the extreme. Not only was the building one of the largest I had seen (covering not less than five or six acres) but the volumes it harbored were amazing in their profusion and variety. My first surprise was at the discovery that there were no railings, fences or locked doors, as in all other libraries I had known. Here the visitor was admitted without question to every room and corridor; my second surprise —and a far greater one—was caused by the queer arrangement of the books. For the volumes were catalogued and stacked, not alphabetically, but chronologically; there was a gallery reserved for each century of Atlantean history, down to the seventh century B. S.; and within the galleries, the books were arranged by authors and subjects in a way that impressed me as utterly novel. In a niche among the books, for example, one would observe the bust of a stern-browed, bearded man; and, coming close, one would note that this was the poet Sargos; and just below the bust one would find the complete collection of the poet's works, as well as the commentaries upon them. Or, in another corner of the room, one would pause to admire the painting of a crowded ancient seaport; and the inscription below the painting would tell one that this was the vanished maritime city of Therion; and just beneath this inscription would be the books wherein Therion was pictured and discussed.

In a way, the building reminded me of a museum as much as of a library, for, in addition to the paintings and statues, each gallery was featured by furniture, rugs, vases, tapestries and decorations that corresponded with the original date of the books. The effect of oddity was enhanced by the fact that the volumes themselves, while in many cases modern reprints, were not infrequently bound in the style of their first editions; and the total impression was most curious and interesting, considering the contrasting sizes and the numberless shades and colors of the books, and the various grades of silk, parchment and artificial leather in which they were attired.

Yet the appearance of the books was the least noteworthy fact about them. Their sheer abundance was a source of unceasing astonishment to me—it seemed as if every era in Atlantean history had been a literary one. As nearly as I could determine, there had been an average of several hundred books a year which had been thought worthy of preservation—and the high period of productivity had already endured for twenty-five centuries! Nor were the favored works merely stored up in dusty shelves where they might remain forever unnoticed—every book of the scores which I opened had been well thumbed, and the crowds constantly browsing along the alcoves and aisles gave evidence that literary interest was not purely a thing of the past.

It was not long before I myself felt inclined to emulate those enthusiasts. Seated in company with twenty or thirty Atlanteans before the long marble table that adorned the most modern of the galleries, I began to taste the contents of several books I had selected at random; and so delightful did they prove, that it was four or five hours before I had any thought of leaving.

WHILE all the books which I inspected proved richly diverting, the one that interested me most was a little volume entitled "Social Life in the Thirty-first Century." When I recall today the unusual size of the type and the extreme simplicity of the style, I feel sure that the book was designed for an immature audience; but this fact did not then occur to me, and I found the work admirably suited to my needs. Questions that had been perplexing me ever since my arrival in Atlantis were now explained, in a manner that dispersed all doubts; and I found myself possessed of a clearer conception than ever before of Atlantean ideas and institutions.

I had been wondering, for example, about the statue-like palace wherein Rawson and I had been imprisoned; I was now informed that this, "The Temple of the Stars," was among the oldest buildings in Atlantis, having been erected just before the Submergence so that the people might bring back to mind at will the aspect of the skies. I had been wondering, likewise, about the "Hall of Public Enlightenment," that amber-hued and sapphire theatre in which I had lately witnessed several debates; I now read that such a building had been erected centuries before in each of the Atlantean cities as a place of popular assemblage, a sort of forum, wherein the people might decide upon public questions; and I also learned that any citizen might attend the meetings there, that any might take part in the discussions, and that it was at such popular gatherings that the few laws of the country were proposed and the most important problems weighed and settled.

The discussion of the Halls of Public Enlightenment naturally paved the way for a description of the political system and government of the Sunken World. "The State of Atlantis," I read, "is neither a monarchy, an oligarchy, nor a republic. It is a Commonality, which means that all things are possessed in common by the people and all activities shared among them. At the head of the Atlantean State is the High Chief Adviser, whose principle duty is by way of counseling the people, but who decides certain specified

minor questions confronting the Atlantean State and is empowered to assume dictatorial authority in case of a national crisis (although such a crisis has never occurred since the riots of the second century A. S., following the passage of the Milares Compulsory Population Law).

"Like all the other officials of Atlantis, the High Chief Adviser assumes his position neither by appointment nor by heredity nor by election, but by Automatic Selection; or, in other words, he has taken office after defeating all rivals in a series of debates and rigorous competitive examinations. His term of office is indefinite, but every three years he is expected to prove his fitness by engaging in contests with qualified aspirants for the Advisorship; and unless he can still outdo all opponents, a new chief executive is installed."

It would have seemed to me that such a system would have detracted from the dignity of the High Chief Adviser; but the book informed me that, on the contrary, it added to his dignity, since he was assured of holding office on a basis of merit only. In fact, he was bound to keep fit and even to improve himself while in office; and most High Chief Advisers did actually remain so well qualified that they stayed in power for an average term of thirty years. Indeed, Icenocles (the incumbent at the time of the publication of the book) had already ruled for forty-five years, and now, at the mature age of one hundred and seven, he still regularly put all competitors to shame.

ALL this, of course, told me nothing about Atlantean law-making, law enforcement and the administration of justice. Therefore I eagerly read on, and found many of my questions speedily answered. To my astonishment, I learned that there was no such thing as a legislature or a law-making group in Atlantis!—and yet such bodies were not unknown to the native political theory. "Ancient experience has taught us," said the book, "that representative government usually represents only some particular faction. And in a community whose members are few and all of whose citizens are intelligent, there is no necessity for delegated authority. Local statutes and ordinances were abolished in Atlantis at the time of the Submergence; and the few national laws are proposed in any of the cities in the Hall of Public Enlightenment. Having been debated and approved by an assemblage of a hundred citizens or more, the measure is submitted to a referendum of all the Atlanteans after the lapse of thirty days—and a majority vote will suffice for its passage.

"At the head of each city is a Local Adviser, selected in the same manner as the High Chief Adviser; and, aided by a corps of from five to fifteen assistants also chosen competitively, he decides those questions not settled in the popular assemblies,—questions such as the amount of energy to be devoted to the erection of new buildings, the time and nature of local festivals, the regulation of local hygienic problems, the number of public physicians required to attend the ill and aged, and a dozen other matters of practical and artistic concern. Equally important theoretically, though in actual practice far less so, is the court of eleven judges which presides in each town, settling all disputes among citizens and reprimanding the law-breakers. No doubt there were frequently such persons as law-breakers three thousand years ago, when these courts were planned, but today such offenders are virtually unknown, for the only crimes are those of impulse and passion, and these are exceedingly rare—fortunately, the congenital criminals have been wiped out along with lunatics and morons by our rigorous birth selection. Occasionally, indeed, some diseased person will break some unwritten rule of society, such as that against trapping or slaying fishes or small animals; but the government hospitals care for such unfortunates, just as they care for the criminals of impulse, and not infrequently effect a cure. As for disputes among individuals, they are as obsolete as embezzlement or highway robbery, for now that the ownership of property has been abolished, what is there left to quarrel about? And so for the most part our courts endure somewhat as the appendix endures in the human body—mere anachronistic reminders of an age that is no more."

At a single sitting I read my book from cover to cover. Even aside from what I have already mentioned, the facts that it told me were innumerable and highly varied: how the great golden lamps of Atlantis were electrically lighted and were switched on and off at specified intervals by country-wide clockwork; how all Atlanteans, old and young, ill and healthy, were cared for by the State, so that no man was weighed down with dependents; how disease had been almost wiped out, since all the commoner noxious germs had been conquered; how religion in the organized sense had ceased to exist, for the reason that each man was expected to arrive at his own philosophy; how the temples that littered the country were without theological meaning, but were sanctuaries of beauty whereto any one might come at any time to worship amid the solitude of his own thoughts; how education was one of the prime pursuits of the people, and was participated in by all from childhood to old age, but was never undertaken by the mob method popular in the upper world.

From the few pages that the author of the "Social Life" devoted to the latter subject, I feel sure that the Atlanteans would have been horrified at our system of herding forty or fifty children together in subjection to a glowering pedagogue: their theory was that personal and friendly contact with the teacher was the important thing, and so their boys and girls were taught in small groups, and never for many hours a day, nor with more than a minimum of restraint upon their natural spirits, nor in a specified and unvarying place, for as often as not their school-room was a marble colonnade or the court of a temple or even the open fields. And, in the same way, the higher education among the Atlanteans (except in the case of scientific work requiring laboratory training) was much less formal than among us. There were no such things as universities or university degrees, but men and women of recognized wisdom and learning were chosen to commune with the young and discuss with them the problems of life, much as Socrates did when he presided among his disciples; and these "Guardians of the Mind," as they were called, would counsel and direct their young charges, and guide them in that reading which constituted their primary source of information.

CHAPTER XXV

Duties and Pastimes

IT is from my first visit to the library that I date my real initiation into the affairs of Atlantis. From that time forth I was no longer a stranger in an unknown world; I became involved in such a round of activities that I began to feel almost at home. For it was my good fortune to have plenty to do, far more to do, in fact, than the average Atlantean; and

with the demands of the Sunken World calling me on the one hand, and my old companions of the X-111 drawing me on the other, I did not have far to seek for an interest in life.

First of all, of course, I was applying myself to my "History of the Upper World." It took me a month to plan the book, though meanwhile I devoted hours a day to improving my knowledge of the Atlantean language and institutions. And when finally I had completed my preliminary outline it did not satisfy me entirely, and yet seemed adequate as a working basis. The introductory section of the book—necessarily a lengthy affair—was to be devoted to a description of the modern world, to the various nations, their customs, languages, social systems, scientific advances and wars; and having begun with this grand resumé of modern achievement, I intended to show the steps by which that achievement had been consummated, and to picture in general the course of those social fluctuations, those invasions, battles, slave-raids, civil conflicts, religious persecutions, crusades, economic revolutions, industrial tumults and international blood-feuds that have brought civilization to its present proud estate.

But while I was planning my book, my thoughts were frequently on more personal subjects. And, having completed the outline, I could not forget a certain invitation made me by the most fascinating woman in Atlantis, but wasted no time about seeking her advice and approval.

Late one afternoon, when I knew that her tutoring would be over for the day, I paid my second visit to her home. I went just a little hesitatingly, I remember, yet not without some justifiable hope, for our interview was to begin most auspiciously. It was Aelios herself that came to the door in response to my knock; and it was Aelios that escorted me into the house, with cordial greetings and delighted smiles that reaffirmed my impression of her unrivaled merits.

"Well, my friend, I thought you would be coming," said she, simply, as we took seats side by side on the seaweed sofa we had occupied on my first visit.

"But what made you think that?" I questioned.

"Why, didn't you say you would come?" she returned, in unfeigned surprise. "You're undertaking a difficult task, you know—to write a book in a strange language. Isn't it only natural to want advice?"

"It is, indeed," I confessed, and should have liked to add, "when I can have such a charming adviser."

"I suppose you've been working hard," she continued, evidently unaware of what was in my thoughts. "And, of course, you've brought something with you to show me."

"Yes, I have brought something," I admitted; and, there being no choice, I forthwith unfolded the paper that contained my plans for the history.

For several minutes she gazed at it intently, her features furrowed with thought, while eagerly I awaited her verdict.

"This is going to be very interesting," she at length decided. "As far as I can see, you've covered most of the important points. You will find it easier than I thought to write in our language—your beginning is most promising. Of course, you do make some errors of style. . . ." And she proceeded to point out my mistakes, in such a manner that I felt certain never to repeat them.

For possibly an hour—or two—we discussed my outline, though all the while I was conscious that there was something in Atlantis far more interesting to me than my book.

I was still aware of that fact, when, at last, feeling that it was growing late, I arose reluctantly to leave. As she took my hand, Aelios flashed upon me her most genial smile, and requested, "Come again, my friend. Perhaps I'll be able to help you some more. Our doors are always open, you know."

"Well, if it wouldn't be asking too much of you," I started to reply, fumbling for words, while the blood rushed all at once to my head.

"It will be a pleasure. And besides"—here she hesitated momentarily, and her fingers absently toyed with the folds of her gown—"besides, if I help you with your book, I will also be helping the State."

"Yes, possibly that's true," I conceded. And so what could I do but agree to give Aelios a further opportunity to help the State?"

But if I based any glamorous hopes upon her evident friendliness, I was building without knowledge of my foundations. Not long after my visit to her, a chance conversation showed me how far I was from that goal which my more sanguine fancies pictured.

IT was Xanocles that unwittingly made me see the difficulties. During one of our numerous little talks, he touched casually upon the marriage system of Atlantis. "The Milares Compulsory Population Law," he chanced to inform me, "is perhaps not the only reason for the present superiority of the Atlantean stock. Another factor is what I may call the marital selection. This is regulated primarily by custom and is almost exclusively in the hands of the women, yet is so rigid that an inferior man can hardly find a mate—indeed, a superior woman would be disgraced by linking herself to a weakling."

"But just what do you mean by a weakling?" I inquired.

Xanocles looked at me in surprise. "A weakling, of course, is one with nothing to give to society. A great poet, for example, could never be thought of as a weakling; nor a competent painter, nor philosopher, nor musician, nor biologist. But the man whose contributions show no particular skill or individuality is regarded as a weakling, no mattter what his pursuit. Naturally, he is not condemned so long as he does his best; but he is not regarded as a fit subject for marriage except with another weakling—and, needless to say, weaklings are not permitted to propagate."

If Xanocles noticed that I was moody and silent for the rest of the day, the reason would not have been hard to find. I do not believe that, in my own world, I had ever suffered from what is known as an inferiority complex; but among the Atlanteans, with their higher standards, mere honesty demanded that I question my own qualifications. And what, I wondered, had I to offer to a woman such as Aelios? Would not my meagre attainments appear childish and unattractive to her? Even if I finished my "History of the Upper World," would it not be a second-rate affair, altogether incapable of winning her admiration? And would I not, by comparison with the natives, be considered a weakling, a man whom Aelios could not marry without incurring disgrace?

For days and weeks I was harassed by such thoughts; and it was to be long before I had wholly recovered. Meanwhile, however, I was partially consoled by the companionship of Xanocles. The friendship begun at our first meeting, was strengthening and solidifying in the course of the months; the proximity of our lodgings rendered it easy for us to see one another, but there also seemed to be a certain proximity of mind, which made each of us take pleasure in the company of the other; and in spite of the gulf of race, training and experience, we found that

we actually had more in common than many persons who have spent all their lives in the same home. And so he would often seek me out, and we would spend hours exchanging ideas in the dim seclusion of my rooms; and often I would seek him out, and we would hold friendly debates in the quiet of his rooms; and not infrequently we might have been seen strolling arm in arm about the city, while I pictured to him the wonders and vastness of the upper world, or while he in his turn regaled me with colorful reminiscences, and told how he was employed by the State as a binder and designer of books, but how he spent his spare time in writing economic and philosophical treatises or delivering lectures in favor of the Emergence.

It was under the pilotage of Xanocles that I was introduced to the social life of Atlantis. The Atlanteans did not spend all their time in grave and serious pursuits, as I had at first imagined; they did not devote themselves to art until it palled upon them, or seek for beauty until it became blurred and illusory; but they knew how to vary their lives and make them symmetrical, and they had quite as much time for laughter and recreation as for earnest endeavor and sober thought. Indeed, they proved to be an unusually sociable people; and after I had entered with Xanocles into the rare spirit of their life and pastimes, I was forced to conclude that a prime reason for the success of Atlantean society was the sane balance it preserved, and the fact that its more ideal aims were tempered by a recognition and a measured encouragement of all the normal inclinations of man.

FOR sheer range and variety, the Atlantean pastimes excelled those of any other people I had ever encountered. To begin with the simplest first, there were athletic games, races and competitions that might have been popular even in the upper world; and on the outskirts of Archeon were fields where the young and even the middle-aged gathered in crowds, testing their prowess by boxing and wrestling, by hurling round, flat objects like the ancient discus, by sprinting along specified race-courses, by engaging in a sort of ball game remotely like tennis, or by participating in that more popular contest known as "sortos," which reminded me of baseball except for the fact that it did not require so many players. I was surprised to observe that the Atlanteans could enter into these sports with hot enthusiasm; but I also noted that they could view their athletics with sanity, and were interested in their games only while actually engaged in them, and did not come forth in throngs as mere onlookers, nor waste time discussing the contests beforehand or after they were over, nor prostitute their spirit to a professional or commercial outlook.

Not less popular than the athletics—in fact, probably much more popular—were the dances that featured prominently in Atlantean life. These were of a hundred styles and varieties, from the ethereal butterfly movements of trained women, such as Aelios, to the tripping and capering of children keeping time spontaneously to the rhythm of a song. Leaving out of account the dances for which unusual skill was necessary, the most interesting to my mind were those held on the polished floors of the temples, where as many as a hundred men and women would gather, all swaying synchroneously to the subdued beat of the music, some in couples holding hands and some singly, but all lightly passing back and forth with bird-like co-ordinated movements, until as one watched, one lost sight of individuals and thought of them all only as the parts of some exquisite, ever-varying whole.

It was not surprising to me to observe that the Atlantean love of the dance was matched by an equal taste for music. Having no technical musical knowledge, I cannot comment upon the Atlantean development of the art, except to say that its cultivation was widespread, that public concerts were held almost daily in the halls of Archeon, and that invariably their effect

That this noise was somehow connected with the quickening wind was apparent from the first; and the relationship became evident when the path swerved abruptly away from the wall and I glanced back, to behold a series of queer-looking machines supported on stone pedestals high up against the glass. It would be impossible to say just what the machines were like . . . so swiftly were they rotating that they formed each a gray blur through which the green of the wall was vaguely discernible.

upon me was pleasing beyond anything I had ever heard on earth. Perhaps it was that the Atlantean music possessed in high degree the power of awakening ecstacy and visions; perhaps it was that its restrained melancholy and plaintive rapture were as keys, that unlocked a universe beyond the universe of sense, and brought the time-bound spirit into touch with the timeless; but, at all events, it possessed a ravishing power reminding me of the most consummate violin performances, and yet surpassing even the violin in the almost complete severance it effected between body and soul.

Much the same may be said of the drama in Atlantis—a drama almost as popular as the music, and built like the music upon that beauty which reaches beyond time and space. The prose drama seems never to have been introduced; poetry, as the natural vehicle for ecstatic expression, was evidently regarded as the inevitable substance of all plays; and the playwrights were all in a tradition that might have appealed to Sophocles and Euripides, although they had never heard of those master dramatists. Indeed, Atlantis had a score of dramatic writers who in my judgment were in no way inferior to any produced by classical Greece; and the best works of these authors, staged with picturesque simplicity and presented by actors of power, afforded me some of the most absorbing hours I passed during all my years in Atlantis.

But if delighted by such performances, I was not less pleased to note that dramatics flourished also on a small scale. In any little social gathering one of the most popular diversions would be the improvization and acting of short plays; and the proficiency of the Atlanteans in this game seemed almost incredible to me, for the actors would not only originate their own little dramas, but would speak their impromptu lines with feeling and beauty; and so deeply was the spirit of poetry engrained that long fluent passages of exceptional verse would sometimes be delivered spontaneously.

Beyond these dramatic exhibitions, the chief private pastime of the Atlanteans was in the art of discussion. To say that discussion was an art is not to exaggerate; it was believed that the mark of the cultured man was his ability to express himself intelligently; and themes for consideration in an Atlantean drawing room varied from the latest poetry and the latest music to the nature of the human personality and the ultimate meaning of life. To the self-respecting citizen, it would have been an insult to suggest that he avoid the boredom of conversation by games of dominoes or cards; and it would have seemed ludicrous to attempt to gossip concerning one's food or clothes, one's athletic prowess, one's neighbor's idiosyncrasies or bad manners, or any of those hundred and one subjects that might have proved diverting in upper world conversation.

WHILE Xanocles was introducing me to the social life of Atlantis, much of my time was being taken up by social life of a different type. Now that I had been elevated to the dignity of Atlantean citizenship, I could not forget that I had thirty-eight comrades who aspired to a similar honor. I saw fully as much of my former shipmates as before; indeed, I saw some of them more than ever, and in particular Captain Gavison, who would frequently visit me to exchange reminiscences; and I rubbed shoulders with the whole crew at the regular bi-weekly meetings of the Upper World Club, which were now held in my apartment.

These meetings were sometimes exciting affairs, perhaps because there was little else in Atlantis which offered the possibility of excitement. Looking back after the lapse of years, it is not easy for me to recall just what there was to be agitated about; but it is certain that we would be agitated indeed, and that there would be fiery debates and discussions, which occasionally became so heated that President Gavison would rap and rap with the bit of stone that served him as gavel, raising his voice until he almost shouted and the sheer awe of his presence would restore order. As nearly as I can remember, most of the disputes were due to conflicting opinions of Atlantis; for frequently one of the club members would denounce the Sunken World in the most picturesque terms at his disposal; and immediately some champion of Atlantis would spring to his feet in disagreement, and the debate would wax fast and furious, most of the club taking a part, until the imperious voice of the President would put an end to the contest.

Sometimes, however, the altercation would be over some proposal for improving our status in Atlantis. Many and curious were the views as to the drawbacks of our lot; and one of our members would be likely to suggest that we attempt the construction of a motor boat or of an automobile; and another would be convinced that a prime shortcoming of Atlantis was the absence of the phonograph or of motion pictures; and many would toy fondly with the idea of escape, and would advocate wild and wholly impractical schemes that would foment a tumult in the club. As time went by, it became increasingly apparent that the majority would never be reconciled to Atlantis; they felt estranged by its art, overwhelmed by its majesty, irritated by its suave peacefulness; and while they still studied the native language for several hours a day, and at times derived much satisfaction from being allowed a part in the native pastimes and athletics, yet on the whole they felt out of place in an atmosphere not adapted to them, and were coming to look upon the upper world as a sort of lost Elysium.

CHAPTER XXVI

Curiosities, Freaks and Monstrosities

EVEN though my companions felt constantly ill at ease in Atlantis, yet as the weeks went by they were becoming more proficient in the use of the native tongue and were taking their places in the life of the Sunken World. One by one they were being summoned, as I had been summoned, before the Committee on Selective Assignments; and each in turn was ordered to perform some specified daily work after taking the usual thirty days' tour around Atlantis.

Captain Gavison, as one of the most adept of all in mastering the language, was one of the first to be graduated into citizenship. But his advancement brought him no great pleasure, since his prescribed duty was to spend two and a half hours daily in a bureau engaged in compiling statistics of population and industry; and his chosen work for the State, which was to write a comparison of Atlantean and upper world civilization, gave him no end of trouble owing not only to linguistic difficulties but to his lack of training in authorship.

Meanwhile Stranahan and Rawson had also matriculated into citizenship; but their assigned work differed strikingly from the Captain's. Rawson, as a well formed and brawny youth, was permitted to exercise his muscles for an hour and a half daily in a marble quarry some miles to the north of the city; while Stranahan, who had been given his choice of several

occupations, decided that it would suit him best to serve three hours daily as doorman at the Archeon City Museum.

It seemed almost as if this position had been made to order for him; for when he stood at the museum entrance, robed in an official red, and politely directed visitors to the various aisles and departments, he had the dignity of one born to a lofty station. His work was not altogether easy, he assured me, for the exhibits were many and confusing, and he had difficulty in memorizing their names and positions; yet to see him as he swayed commandingly from side to side of the great arched doorway, with chest thrown well out and hands folded sedately behind him, one could scarcely have believed that he was troubled by any doubts, but might have imagined him to be the owner and creator of the building.

Indeed, the interest which he took in the museum seemed to be almost personal. He summoned the whole Upper World Club to inspect it, as though it had been his own handiwork; and he directed us from gallery to gallery and from exhibit to exhibit with the serenity of perfect knowledge. And while there was much about the institution that neither he nor the rest of us could understand, yet we had him to thank for introducing us to some truly extraordinary displays.

Unquestionably, the museum was one of the things best worth seeing in all Atlantis. Not only were the contents vivid and remarkable beyond description, but the building itself was a never-failing source of wonder. The sides and roof were of glass, and on the lower levels the walls were colorless and transparent, so that passers-by could feast their eyes on the more conspicuous displays, just as on earth the passers-by may gaze into the shop windows. But above the first story the glass was no longer crystal-clear, but was frosted and tinted to the semblance of clouds driven across a pale blue sky; and over those clouds and down from the enormous rounded dome a dim rainbow seemed to reach, spreading a web that varied in hue and texture with every step one took and every variation in the luster of the searchlights that shone faintly from above.

To glance at this superb building, one would never have guessed what queer objects it concealed. For my own part, I was simply astounded—astounded at the beauty of some exhibits, at the strangeness and ghastliness of others. The department of science and inventions (to select merely at random) was a source of bewilderment, for it showed the oddest contrivances I had ever beheld—machines for preventing earthquakes, machines for regulating the undersea temperature, machines for detecting and isolating noxious bacteria, machines for transforming iron into copper or tin into lead, machines for boring through the ground as a submarine bores through the water.

But what particularly interested me was the historical department. I shall never forget my first visit to it; it was one of the most surprising experiences of my life. Imagine, for example, a glass case that contained nothing but the fragment of a brick wall, a perfectly commonplace wall of red brick!—and imagine reading that this was a substance employed for building purposes in the days before the Æsthetic Renaissance! Or, again, picture yourself in contact with half a dozen gold coins, larger than silver dollars and each worth several days' wages, yet left unguarded where any one might seize them!—and fancy reading that these bits of metal had once been considered valuable and had even been contended for and hoarded! Or, to take still another illustration, conceive of one's surprise at seeing a carefully treasured speck of coal, and being informed that this was used for fuel in the days before intra-atomic energy; or paint for yourself the shock of coming across a case of fine jewelry, of rings, earrings, brooches, bracelets, and the like, only to find them represented as typical of primitive taste!

BUT while all of the historical department proved most diverting to me, there was one section that interested me more than all the rest. This was known as the "Hall of Horrors." Once having observed the title, I was eager to explore the department in detail—and I was not to be disappointed. Somehow, there was something about the "Hall of Horrors" that seemed familiar, even though a placard at the entrance assured one that all the exhibits had been preserved from a remote antiquity. Thus, the first thing that I noted was a gas masque said to date from the third century B. S., but looking as if it might have been useful in the present World War. Beside the gas masque was a steel helmet reported to be from the fourth century B. S.; yet, had it not been for the card identifying it, I might have suspected it of being taken from the Germans this very year.

This suspicion, however, would not have applied to the other military implements ranged about the room; most of them were so crude of design as to make me positively smile. Even as I write this, I can re-capture the mood of exultation I felt at the proof of our own superiority: the rifles of the second century B. S. were so puny-looking and feeble as to appear worse than primitive, and the bayonets were fully half a foot shorter than our own; the machine guns of the first century B. S. had obviously not half the killing capacity of ours, and the cannons were not constructed for long distance firing; while the conspicuous absence of the armored "tank," the hand grenade and "liquid fire," showed that the ancient Atlanteans would have had much to learn from the sanguinary experts of our own day.

From the "Hall of Horrors" Stranahan conducted us into another and scarcely less interesting department that was apparently nameless, since its miscellany of ancient oddities would have defied classification. "Here's where you'll feel at home," grunted our guide, as with a gesture of welcome he preceded us through the doorway. But his remark had been poorly chosen. We did not feel in the least at home. In fact, I had never had a more distinct reminder of my exile than when I gazed at great brick and iron chimneys towering within glass cases, and catalogued as typical of "The Age of Steel and Fire"; and it made me almost homesick to see pictures of long-vanished cities wrapped in great clouds of smoke and soot, and described succinctly as "Representative of the Tubercular Era in Old Atlantis." But much more surprising to me were the huge ancient furnaces, resurrected in detail, with puppet stokers in the act of pitching the coal into the giant flames. An explanatory card naïvely declared that "These were once considered necessary evils, not only for industrial reasons, but because the Submergence had not yet made possible the automatic regulation of the weather."

But an apparently insignificant object in the same department aroused far greater interest among my companions. Carefully guarded under a glass cover, where it had evidently undergone some special process of preservation, was a flat, little rectangle of some shrivelled brownish substance, which upon close scrutiny I took to be tobacco!

That my guess had been correct was demonstrated

by a placard that accompanied the exhibit: "This is a fragment of a narcotic imported into old Atlantis from across the western ocean. It found high favor at one time among the women of the country, and to a lesser extent among the men, although its use was considered a mark of effeminacy. There were several common ways of absorbing this drug, the most popular being to ignite it and suck the smoke into the lungs by means of a little twisted tube. Happily, this disgusting habit has long ago disappeared, and the elimination of this plant at the time of the Good Destruction is not the least of the benefits conferred by Agripides."

I am afraid that few of my companions agreed with the latter statement. They cast longing glances in the direction of the tobacco; and, had it not been safely guarded beneath glass, its career would surely have ended then and there.

With the memory of the tobacco still rankling in our minds, we were escorted into what was known as the "Department of Human Evolution." Here was depicted the rise of man from the lowest savage state to the height of present-day Atlantis. A series of skeletons indicated the gradual transformation from a broad-boned, ape-like thing to a big-skulled modern —and, to my great surprise, the large cranial capacity was represented as belonging almost exclusively to the aboriginal and Post-Submergence eras!

WHILE I was wondering why this should be, I chanced to overhear the words of a sagacious-looking bearded man, who accompanied a party of smooth-faced youths, evidently as their tutor. "Before the Submergence," he was saying, "we were civilized in a rude sort of way, and yet were not intelligent. That is to say, we were not intelligent as a people, for only one man in a hundred possessed any understanding of civilization; and it was that one in a hundred, or perhaps one in a thousand, who accomplished all the changes in science, art and culture. Today, however, every normal man is intelligent enough to be more than the dead lumber of civilization. You will observe this skull here"—the speaker paused, and pointed to one of the most ancient of the group—"this is the fossil of a paleolithic pre-Atlantean, who inhabited our island forty-five or fifty thousands years ago. You can see for yourselves how much higher and ampler the skull is than that of your own ancestor of thirty-two hundred years ago, although of course the latter represented the world's most advanced civilization. Fortunately, our intellectual decline was counteracted by the vigorous measures of Agripides and his successors, and we can now boast of being on the same high mental plane as the men of fifty thousand years ago. . . . ."

The speaker withdrew with his students toward a further exhibit, and I could catch no more of what he said. But I had heard quite enough, for it seemed to me that his words were not to be taken seriously. And I was more interested in browsing about the gallery than in listening to his pointless remarks—particularly since I had chanced to set eyes on some arresting tables of statistics. These figures, which dated back more than three thousand years, showed how the rise in the appreciation of beauty had been almost simultaneous with the growth of intellect; how the mental advance and the decline of crime seemed likewise to be related phenomena; how the general measure of happiness, as indicated by the absence of nervous disorders, mental abberations and suicides, had been incalculably increased since the intellectual revival.

Having read to the end of the statistics, I passed with my companions down several long corridors to the art departments, where some of the more notable contemporary paintings and statues were placed on exhibition along with a multitude of classic works. But if I were to dwell upon the contents of these galleries, beyond saying that its art was in that same exquisite and original style I had already observed, I should have to add chapters to my story; and, likewise, I should find my narrative interminable if I were to describe the other exhibits: the natural history department, with specimens of the flora and fauna of old Atlantis, the paleo-botanical department with life-like restorations of long-extinct tree-ferns and gigantic palms, the sociological-historical departments, with represenations of scenes in prisons, poorhouses, orphanages, and insane asylums, all of which were declared to have been "herding places of the days when unfortunates were so plentiful that they had to be dealt with by the pack, instead of, as at present, being consigned individually to the care of those sympathetic men and women who make social work their service for the State."

But while the sheer abundance of the exhibits makes it impossible to describe them all, there is one that I must not fail to mention, since in some ways it was the most remarkable in the museum. We had just entered the section ambiguously known as "Curiosities, Freaks and Monstrosities," when Stranahan, with an odd twinkling expression, warned us to be ready for a surprise. And, certainly, he warned us with good reason! As we glanced toward the further wall, we were shocked by sight of something dazzlingly familiar—so very familiar, indeed, that several of us uttered little cries of amazement. Neatly arranged behind a glass case, flattened against the rear panels so as to afford a better view, were dozens of well known blue uniforms! Among them, from the Ensign's stripes, I recognized my own; and among them, also, was the decorated uniform of the Captain! And above them, on a large-lettered placard, appeared the statement that these were the clothes worn by the only aliens to enter Atlantis since the Submergence, and that they were interesting as showing what grotesque and unsightly garments were fashionable in the upper world!

CHAPTER XXVII

The Warning of the Waters

ALTHOUGH at times during my first months in Atlantis I may have felt out of place and wished that the waters would open above me and bear me back to my own land, yet my longings were never mixed with misgivings and my regrets never tinged with fears. Even in my most pessimistic moments, I had no doubt but that the Sunken World was secure; that no menace to life or tranquility lurked in its well-ordered depths; that I might live out my days unmolested and in a peaceful routine. Hence I was all the more shocked at discovery of that peril which was to give Atlantis the aspect of a beleaguered city, and to overcast its beauty with foreboding and horror.

I had been in Atlantis over a year when the crisis occurred. It was a crisis as startling and unexpected as the flaming of a meteor out of a calm sky; and yet, had we but known it, it had been preparing its way insidiously during the days of fancied safety, like some mortal disease that burrows through tissues which are apparently sound. And, like such a disease, it might have been checked had it only been discovered in time.

I remember that one night, after many onerous hours devoted to my "History of the Upper World," I slept

but poorly, with an intermittent slumber disturbed by nightmares of huge towers crashing to destruction. And during the wakeful intervals my thoughts framed other nightmares, and I was agitated by a vague alarm and excitement, though I could not understand why. Not until much later did it occur to me that some telegraphic force, akin to the magnetic will power of the Atlanteans, may have conveyed to me the deep unrest that surcharged the atmosphere.

But whether or not this explanation be valid, I know that in the morning, when I had dressed and stood in my roof-bedroom gazing down into the streets, I became acutely conscious that something was wrong. Every few minutes a native or group of natives could be seen rushing by at a speed I had never before observed among the unhurried Atlanteans; and it seemed to me that their faces were convulsed as though with pain or fear; while the voices occasionally borne up to me had the nervousness, almost the hysteria, of men in a panic.

What could have happened? I wondered. Had the Atlanteans all suddenly gone mad? Or were they facing an insurrection or a civil war? Or had the government perhaps been overthrown by a band of insurgents? Or had there been an earthquake through which I had somehow slept? Or was there an invasion from the upper world, and had some of our countrymen, seeking for clues of the lost X-111, discovered the Sunken World and entered?

All these possibilities, as I turned them over in my mind, seemed so fantastic that I had to discard them. Yet it still filled me with apprehension to observe the natives scurrying about the streets—apprehension that was to be speedily justified.

I WAS just preparing to go out and investigate when there came an excited rapping at my door. Unable to imagine who might be seeking me at this early hour, I cried out sharply, "Come in!"; and the door swung abruptly open to admit—Captain Gavison!

He was far from his composed and normal self. His pale blue costume was all ruffled, and had been flung over his shoulders as though in great haste; his long hair hung dishevelled over his narrow bronzed brow; his face looked all hot and sweaty; his gray eyes burned and sparkled with a vague distress.

He did not wait for a formal greeting. "Have you—have you heard the news?" he gasped, as he strode into the room.

I confessed that I had heard nothing.

"Don't see how you could help hearing!" he snapped, and began to pace slowly about the floor, with brow wrinkled in bitter thought.

"What news is it?" I demanded. "Just what have you heard?"

"One of the natives told me strange things last night," he confided, as he continued his restless perambulations about the room. "I haven't slept a wink, not a wink!"

"What strange things? We're not going to be sent back home, are we?" I inquired, with an abortive effort to be facetious.

"We'll be sent to a worse place than that!" he growled, bristling almost into his old military manner. "The glass wall has been cracked!"

"The glass wall cracked?" I cried, stupidly, stunned by the terror of the words.

"Yes, the glass wall has been cracked," the Captain affirmed, in a more matter-of-fact manner. "One of the patrol boats discovered the damage late yesterday afternoon. There's a dangerous fracture near the entrance of the Salty River."

For reply I could only groan. The glass wall of Atlantis cracked!—the whole Atlantic Ocean bearing down upon the Sunken World! Too well I understand what that meant, too well to require comment! And in that first moment of horrible realization I had visions of torrents pouring through a gap in the wall, flooding over the streets and temples and highest towers of the land!

"But how—how under heaven did it happen?" I burst forth, when I had half recovered from the first staggering blow.

"That is not hard to say," he declared, slowly and in measured tones. "At least, there are suspicions—"

"Suspicions?" I demanded.

"Suspicions that you and I and the rest of us are to blame."

"But how is that possible?" I exclaimed.

"It's possible, all right. It all happened before we got here. The X-111, caught in the whirlpool outside the Salty River, was hurled by the force of the waters against the glass wall, probably striking with its steel prow, which, as you know, was built for ramming our foes. The wall, luckily, was too stout to be shattered; but it was cracked, and the crack must have been growing all this time without being noticed."

"Merciful gods!" I cried. "Then if—if anything happens to Atlantis, it will be all on account of us!"

But before Gavison had had time to reply, there came another rapping at the door. And, hardly waiting for my summons, a wild-eyed Xanocles burst in. Like my other visitor, he did not waste time on greetings. "You—do you know?" he faltered, with a lack of self-command most unusual in him.

Solemnly we assured him that we knew.

Without further delay we plunged into the subject that had brought him to us. "Maybe you'd like to go and see for yourselves?" he suggested.

"But how can we see for ourselves?" I asked.

"The government—that is to say, the High Chief Adviser—has ordered the intra-atomic river boats put at the people's disposal. Seven of them are now plying back and forth, bearing thousands to the glass wall. The Adviser thinks the people should see for themselves just what has happened."

"Very well then, let's go," decided the Captain.

Without another word the three of us set out together. In silence we strode down the long avenue that meandered toward the river. And as we sped along we encountered dozens of the natives, all of them in as great a hurry as we; and all had faces flushed and excited, or fearful and drawn, or pale as though with apprehension.

UPON arriving at the piers, we found that hundreds of Atlanteans had preceded us, most of them so transformed that I could hardly recognize them as citizens of the Sunken World; for they were chattering wildly, or pacing distractedly back and forth, or uttering half-hysterical exclamations; and one or two were mumbling and muttering to themselves, or moving their lips silently in what might have been prayer. But they did not fail to notice our arrival; angry exclamations broke forth at sight of us, and several of the men and women withdrew visibly from us; and, in my surprise, I did not know whether to ascribe their hostility to the unpopularity of Xanocles or to the part that Gavison and I had played as unconscious agents of disaster.

To calm the excited multitude, a vigorous-looking young man ventured to raise his voice, and proclaim, "Friends, there is still no reason for alarm. We do not yet know how serious the damage may be, but the

glass wall still holds; not a drop of water has broken through. . . . There is reason to believe that the break will be speedily repaired, and that we will go on living as happily as ever. . . ."

These words, I was glad to see, had a soothing effect upon the crowd. Yet I was relieved when at last the boat hove into view, a slender affair as long as the longest river vessel, but not more than twenty-five feet from rail to rail. I did not then give any attention to its details, though I did note how low-lying it was, with but one visible deck, one small cabin and no smokestack or mast. But after it had drawn up to the pier and the gangplank was flung down, I wasted no time about boarding it with my two companions. Benches and chairs were strewn liberally about the deck, sufficient to accommodate the entire crowd; and we had hardly taken seats when the boat commenced to shiver and throb, and we started upstream with the velocity of an express train.

So rapidly did we move that in less than an hour we were approaching the head of the Salty River. And during the interval I only once ventured to break the moody solitude of my own thoughts.

"When did you find out about all this?" I asked Xanocles, who like the rest of us seemed to be absorbed in bitter reveries.

"Last night," he returned, in an abstracted manner. "I chanced to be in the Hall of Public Enlightenment, and heard the news over the Autophone."

"The Autophone?" I demanded.

"Well, naturally, you wouldn't know what that is," explained Xanocles. "We get our ordinary news by wireless telegraph, of course, and it is then reported by speakers at the various public meeting places. But the Autophone is more effective, and is used only on rare and important occasions. It operates instantaneously, and consists of a tube and electrical attachment, enabling one to hear a speaker miles away."

"I understand," said I, for, after all, the Autophone did not impress me as unfamiliar.

And with that we lapsed again into silence, a silence shared by all the hundreds of passengers. For now that they had actually embarked upon the voyage, their excitement seemed to have died down to a mood of solemn waiting, a tense and painful waiting all too apparent in the rigid, staring faces of the men and the women's pale cheeks and frightened eyes.

It was with relief that at length I saw the river growing white and agitated ahead of us, and knew that we were not far from the valve where the torrents were hurled in from the sea. Yet I was filled with impatience before we swerved finally into a little side canal and our boat came to a landing before a long granite dock whence a sister ship was just leaving. I need hardly state that I lost no time in stepping across the gangplank, as soon as the crowded state of the deck permitted; and though we were still three or four miles from the glass wall, I was thankful to be able to walk the distance.

TO watch my two companions and myself set out along the clay footpath toward the wall, one might have thought that we were athletes training for a race. But if we moved rapidly, we were in no way exceptional, for there were scores who easily kept pace with us.

For many minutes we hastened parallel to the Salty River. We passed the long, white rapids; we passed the spot where the gigantic jet of water shot thundering out of the pipe like valve; we saw the wall itself sloping down before us, and near the wall we could make out a long, black mass which ultimately resolved itself into a multitude of humans.

This multitude, as we drew near, showed itself to be in a wildly agitated condition. Men and women were pacing frantically to and fro, swarming and squirming like worms or ants; some were gesticulating vehemently, some speaking in high-pitched tones audible from afar, some merely standing petrified like men dealt a blow too great to bear.

Yet, as we took our places among them, we could observe nothing that gave cause for alarm. To our right loomed the elongated, steely gray valve, a great tube as high as a three-story building, which narrowed as it approached the wall, and passed through it on a level with the ground. And just before us sloped the wall itself, now roped off so that we could not come within a stone's throw, but apparently still the same smooth, dark greenish barrier I had viewed months before. No sign of any break or crack was visible, and it was almost with disappointment that I noticed how flawless it seemed.

But while I stood there watching I heard a faint swishing sound, like the lapping of sea-waves against the rocks. I may have been mistaken, for amid the chattering and shouting of the mob and the distant roaring of waters from the valve, it was difficult to be sure just what one heard. But Gavison and Xanocles seemed to note that same ominous noise, and both paused to listen, while the anxious expression on their faces did not relieve my misgivings. "It's the water working through the inner layers of the glass," I thought I heard Xanocles remark; but here again I could not be sure, for even as he spoke a tumult of shouts burst forth, and I turned in sudden fright to see what was the matter.

This time I did not have long to wait. On one of the great roof-supporting stone columns a searchlight had been mounted; and I observed that it was slowly swinging round, casting a piercing illumination upon the wall from a bright, yellow eye glaring like the headlight of a locomotive. For a moment it shook and wavered as if it could not find a focus; then it became rigid and still, and a circle of the wall, many yards across, stood out in brilliant relief.

Instantly the people began to press forward. So excited were they that for a moment I almost lost touch with Gavison and Xanocles, and could catch no glimpse of the illuminated patch of wall. And at the same time shrill cries of terror and dismay broke forth. A man just to my rear groaned as if in pain; a woman gave a half suppressed sob; somewhere from the rear came a hysterical wailing. Then, when the circle in the wall again became visible, I was wedged in so tightly that I scarcely gave it any attention. It was only by degrees that I made out its features, and saw what resembled an enormous piece of cracked crockery. From an amorphous central blur several feet across, great seams and fissures ran in a hundred directions, with long, spidery arms that reached out like the roots of a tree, gradually growing thinner till they vanished in vacancy. It seemed a miracle that the water had not already burst through, for each of the scores of diverging cracks were rods long and must have been many feet deep.

I DO not know how long I stood staring blankly at that tragic break in the glass. I was as one divested of power of thought or movement; I merely hovered there transfixed, listening to the muttering and sighing of the multitude. Strangely enough, it did not occur to me to ask whether the damage could be repaired; it was as though I had known all the

against the wall, after which the port hole was opened and the men poured cement into the cracks.

while that it was beyond remedy . . . and for the moment my attitude was strangely detached, almost impersonal, as though I were the external witness of melancholy and inexorable things. . . .

Yet it was a highly personal thought that startled me back to myself. Somehow, out of some dim subconscious depth, there swept across my mind the vision of two bright, blue eyes—and, with that vision, acute fear seized me, and longing, and despair. That Atlantis should be in danger was fearful enough—but that Aelios should be imperiled was a thought almost too terrible for belief. And, accompanying that first wild stab of alarm for her, there came a sharp desire to see her, to be with her, to speak with her now; and, hopeful that she might be somewhere in this crowd, I began to search all about me, and then to thread my way at random through the dense ranks of people, scanning all the faces in my anxiety, until Gavison and Xanocles, following me with difficulty, began to ask irrelevantly whether the cracks were in the wall or in my head.

But no Aelios was to be seen; and at last I was forced reluctantly to abandon the quest. A dull and settled sadness had fallen over me; and, depressed for no reason that I would have acknowledged, I expressed my purpose of returning at once to Archeon, saying that I had already seen everything there was to be seen.

"But you haven't seen a thing yet," demurred Xanocles, who seemed determined that I should remain. "The submersible repair ships have not yet arrived—and when they come, they should be a sight worth watching."

And he slipped his arm about mine, and drew me with him toward the wall, while I still protested that it would be better for me to return to Archeon.

No doubt in the end I should have had my way, had not another hubbub arisen to distract my attention. Once more the thousands of voices were lifted in excitement; but this time a note of joy was manifest, and even seemed to predominate. At the same time, many hands pointed eagerly toward the illuminated circle in the glass; and from just behind me I heard a thankful murmur that sounded encouragingly like "The repair ships; They're here! They're here!"

Indeed, the repair ships had arrived. Even through the darkest sections of the wall, half a dozen faintly phosphorescent cigar-shaped forms were dimly apparent. They were all rather small, scarcely more than a third of the size of the X-111; but they seemed to be exceedingly agile, and were darting lithely back and forth like great fishes, or else were whirling or pirouetting or standing almost on end, as though stricken with giddiness and unable to control their movements.

"They're having the devil's own time!" muttered Xanocles, as he stood watching. "That's the worst danger-spot in all the ocean, for the waters are constantly in a whirlpool because of the torrents emptied into the Salty River. But our men are brave, and somehow they'll manage it."

"But how can they set about it?" I inquired, unable to imagine any way of making repairs.

"It's far from easy, but it can be done," continued Xanocles. "One of the ships will have to press itself against the wall, so closely that there is no space between. Once all water has been excluded between the vessel and the wall, you understand, the pressure on the ocean side will keep the ship in place. And after the ship is in the proper position, a porthole will be opened, and through this the men will pour cement into the crack."

Even as Xanocles explained, an anchor was dropped from one of the ships into the rocky sea bottom; and the vessel, having steadied itself, began to drift slowly toward the wall, so that at length its side was pressed tightly against the cracked glass. Then a little circle of light seemed suddenly to open on the ship's side; and in that circle I could make out the rigid, determined faces of half a dozen men, while in their hands I could observe a variety of strange rods, tubes, and lantern-like contrivances.

Pessimistic as I had been before, I could not but feel a burst of hope when I watched the capable, courageous way in which these men set to work. And evidently the waiting throng had become hopeful too, for murmurs of admiration and approval were repeatedly on their lips; and as they saw tube after tube of cement poured skilfully into the cracks, they became almost mad with relief; and some began to clap their hands and caper childishly, and some sighed in thanksgiving, and some wept silently, for, after all, Atlantis seemed to have been saved!

Then, with the suddenness of a thunderbolt, all their hopes were dashed out. So swiftly did disaster descend that none had a chance to say how or whence it came—but it was disaster complete and irretrievable. Perhaps it was that the anchor-chain holding the submarine had snapped, or that some water had seeped in between the side of the vessel and the glass wall. At all events, the submarine was plainly visible one moment, the men pumping the liquid cement through long tubes to the very extremities of the crack; and the next moment there was only a dim shadow flitting away into a watery obscurity.

For an instant there was an awed silence. Then, as comprehension dawned upon the crowd, a convulsive shudder swept it through and through, and a howl of horror and dismay rang forth. Men glanced askance at their neighbors, blank terror gaping from their eyes; and all at once, as by a common impulse, hundreds pressed confusedly toward the wall, as though they might succor thus those unfortunates lost in the briny wastes. But many, conscious of the futility of all action, sadly remained in their places, and mutely bowed their heads—a tribute of respect for the drowned.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Waters Retreat

THE eight days that followed the discovery of the crack were among the most harrying I had ever spent. Indeed, they were among the most harrying that any resident of Atlantis had ever spent. That the peril was acute became more and more apparent as the days went by and the damage was not repaired—the submarine disaster which I had witnessed was but the precurser to other and not less frightful disasters. Vessel after vessel battled with the swirling waters in the effort to force itself against the wall and cement the crack; and vessel after vessel was shaken away like a twig by the fury of the maelstrom. Sometimes, fortunately, the portholes were shut in time and the crew managed to save their lives, but on other occasions the maddened waters snatched their prey; and before a week had gone by Atlantis was mourning for seven lost parties of rescuers.

All the country was now in a tumult, I might almost say in a delirium. The regular currents of life had stopped short; men no longer went about their daily duties, the libraries and art galleries were deserted; the young were without tutors, the governmental departments without clerks; and the cities would have

been without bread, had it not been for the drastic orders of the High Chief Adviser. But citizens who once had been amply occupied would loiter aimlessly about the streets, or would flock to the Hall of Public Enlightenment to hear the latest report over the Autophone; or else they would pace nervously along the colonnades, or stand discussing in small groups, nerve-racked and bewildered as men under sentence of death. Though I never heard them mention the fear that must have been uppermost in their minds, yet their pale faces and shuddery manner gave proof of the dread that was preying upon them; and my former shipmates and I had reason to know how overmastering was their terror, for that aversion I had already noted was deepening, and the people would glance at us with hostility and even accusation in their eyes, looking mute reproach at us, as though our coming had been responsible (as indeed it had been) for the threatened end of their world.

Every morning five or six of the little intra-atomic submarines would leave Atlantis through the valve in the eastern wall, where the waters of the Salty River were forced back into the sea. And in the evening (if they survived till evening) they would return through the valve in the western wall, where the waters of the Salty River found entrance. In the interval, their occupants would work as courageously as I had ever known men to work, warring against odds that were apparently insurmountable; while all Atlantis would stand watching, or waiting at the Autophone for news of their progress. It seemed wrongful to my comrades and me that these men, brave and willing as they were, should risk their lives to repair an injury which we had caused; and so at Captain Gavison's suggestion several of us volunteered to join the rescuing forces. But the High Chief Adviser, although expressing his gratitude, refused our offer in terms that could admit of no reply; for the repairing crews, as he explained, consisted of skilled mechanics especially trained for their duties and therefore irreplaceable.

Fortunately, our assistance was not necessary. On the eighth day, the officials in charge of the repairs decided upon a change of tactics; and then it was that the "Acrola," a specially equipped submarine provided with five anchors and an extra battery in intra-atomic engines, made its way out of the Salty River and around the glass dome to the scene of the damage. Truly, it was time that something desperate was done, for, according to official measurements, the crack had expanded between nine and ten inches since its detection. Thanks to its unusual powers of resistance, however, the "Acrola" withstood the buffeting of the waters and remained pressed against the wall while Captain Thermandos and his crew pumped the cement into the innumerable fissures. Except for the extraordinary courage of the men, it is probable that they too would have failed, for the task occupied them for more than six hours, any moment of which might have been their last; and they not only had to fill the cracks, but had to hold to their post till the cement had begun to harden and was no longer in danger of being washed away.

But the notable fact is that they succeeded. Though they were worn and haggard from their exertions, yet they had succeeded magnificently. They had saved Atlantis! After all, the flood-gates would not burst!—the devouring waters would never race along the streets and colonnades! The people might return calmly to their work, certain that tomorrow would bring no new menace.

SUCH, at least, was the general impression. And so great was the public relief that the pendulum swung violently from a crisis of despair to an extreme joy. Like men newly awakened from a nightmare, the Atlanteans refused to believe that the peril had not been utterly wiped away; and so great was the force of the reaction, so sudden the snapping of the tension, that for a while their emotions controlled their heads, and their desire to feel safe became converted into a conviction that they were safe. Later, many of them were to awaken from their self-hypnosis; but during the celebration that followed the repairs, the people almost without exception, acted as if convinced of their rescue; and all the speakers at the great public gatherings referred in positive terms to the deliverance of Atlantis; and the songs that were sung were songs of thanksgiving, as of triumphant escape from a foe; and the games and dances and festive processions were those of a people wild with joy of new-won salvation.

Yet even at the time there was at least one dissenting voice. Like most dissenting voices at a moment of popular emotion, it was but little heard, and then was heard contemptuously; yet it was often to be remembered in later days, when the occasion called for little beyond regret.

Among the seven governmental experts sent to investigate the repairs and report on their soundness, there was one who strenuously challenged the views of his colleagues. While the other six agreed that the damage had been remedied beyond possibility of a further disturbance, the seventh (Peliades by name) brought in a vigorous minority report in which he contended that the relief was only temporary.

His plea, as I remember it, ran somewhat as follows:

"For four or five years—possibly for ten—the repairs will prove adequate; but after that period the damage will re-appear in a much more aggravated form than before. For the cement constitutes a foreign element in the glass, and produces an abnormal bulge, so placing an exceptional strain upon those portions which are still sound. For a while the wall may be able to endure the strain, but in the course of time the additional tension will become too great for the brittle material of the wall to resist; and first small cracks will appear, and then larger, growing by inches and by fractions of inches, until the break spreads towards the surface, and the tremendous pressure of the ocean shatters the remaining barrier. This effect, of course, will take years before it begins to be noticeable; but when finally it becomes apparent, the crack will have spread so far that only heroic measures will be able to save Atlantis.

"The remedy, therefore, is to undertake the immediate erection of a new glass bulwark against the affected portion of the wall. Prodigious though this effort will necessarily be, we will probably be able to complete the work in time. But unless we do complete it, we will find ourselves within a hair's breadth of catastrophe."

Unfortunately—most unfortunately, in view of what ensued—Peliades' warning was scarcely heeded. In some quarters he was denounced as a crank, a mad alarmist; in other quarters he was openly laughed at, or derided as the victim of hysteria; while the majority paid no attention to him at all. Least sympathetic of his hearers were his fellow specialists; for these, in response to an inquiry by the High Chief Adviser, testified at length as to the scientific unsoundness of Peliades' theories, and disproved his views to their own satisfaction and that of the people.

And so the dissenter's motions were quietly tabled,

and Atlantis returned to its normal duties with confidence in the future.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Party of Emergence

ALTHOUGH all Atlantis resumed its normal aspect soon after the wall had been repaired, things were never again to be quite as before. It was as though there were some unseen fissure in the life of the Sunken World as well as in its glass boundary; as though the people realized, subconsciously, that they hovered on the rim of a smoldering volcano. Something seemed to be lacking that had been there before, perhaps because something was present that had never been there before; and the corrosive effects of fear, injected for the first time during all the centuries of the Submergence, seemed to dissipate the charmed tranquility of Atlantis and to suggest that inimical and even treacherous forces lurked beyond the marble fountains and palaces and the weird green-golden dome.

But the one tangible result of the discovery of the crack was the rise of the Party of Emergence. This despised minority group, whose very name had been a phrase of contempt, now burst into a prominence as surprising to its members as to the people as a whole, and for the first time in history, threatened to become a power in Atlantean politics. Perhaps it was that there were thousands who, beset by a secret dread, looked to the Party of Emergence as their only salvation; perhaps it was merely that they had been shocked into a more liberal-minded attitude, and could view the policy of Emergence with wide-open eyes. At all events, a host of disciples flocked voluntarily to the Emergence banners; and among these were many persons of influence and position, including Peliades, the engineer who had declared the wall unsound, and Chorendos, the Local Adviser of Archeon.

And now began a heated and aggressive campaign, conducted incessantly and not without success in the Hall of Public Enlightenment of every town and village in Atlantis—a campaign that threatened to develop into a life-or-death struggle between the regenerated Emergence Party and the more venerable Submergence group. It happened that I myself took an active, if minor part in that contest; and it also happened that the entire Upper World Club was implicated, for we all realized that the cause of Emergence offered us our only opportunity of returning to the upper world.

Innumerable were the meetings that we attended, and innumerable the pleas that we made. To give a complete account of all our activities would be impossible, even if I could recall them all; and so I will have to confine myself to describing a particular meeting, which stands forth in my mind as typical.

One afternoon, many months after the crack in the wall had been sealed, Xanocles and I found ourselves preparing for a strenuous session at the Hall of Public Enlightenment. It had been rumored that the day's meeting was to be unusually interesting, and Xanocles and I were secretly determined to make it so; hence, when we arrived at the sapphire and amber theatre and found almost all the seats occupied, we felt that we had every reason to congratulate ourselves.

We took chairs in the rear, and quietly awaited our turn. A discussion was in progress regarding the award of honor to be made to a certain lyric poet. (I do not know quite what the issue was, for I did not listen attentively.) But everyone understood that this was not to be the topic of the day; and after the question had been settled, a momentary hush came over the audience and many pairs of eyes were bent toward us inquiringly.

Then it was that Xanocles arose. At a gesture from that same broad-browed elderly woman who had presided when Gavison and his crew had been brought to trial long before, my friend stepped out into the aisle and down to the central platform or stage, while all eyes followed him intently and a speechless lull dominated that great assemblage.

"Fellow citizens," he said, not taking time even for an instant's pause after reaching the foot of the stairs, "I am here today to make one of the most momentous proposals ever presented since Agripides pleaded for the Submergence. But it is not a proposal that has never been put forth before; it is merely one that has never been endorsed. It has been, indeed, at the very backbone of the Party of Emergence, and will continue to be argued and preached until it meets with that success which it merits. For it is impossible, my friends, that Atlantis should retain its age-old isolation; modern progress makes such backwardness inconceivable, as the arrival of thirty-nine men from outside has demonstrated. I am certain that if Agripides himself were here now he would agree that our policies must be revised."

Here Xanocles paused as if for emphasis; but the audience remained intently silent, and with increased forcefulness he continued, "The question of emigration, my friends, is one of the most important that can confront any land. Never in the last three thousand years has Atlantis had an adequate law on this subject; our prohibition of emigration has been a form of intolerance unworthy of the high traditions of our people; and free emigration, if forbidden by the arbitrary conventions of society, is justified by the mandates of nature and the normal human craving for romance and adventure.

"Therefore I suggest that the fundamental law of Atlantis be modified. But for the sake of those who fear to be too radical, I recommend that we proceed cautiously at first; let us begin by allowing three or four of our people to visit the upper world; and let these, having made their investigations, return with their reports, so that then, on the basis of definite knowledge, we may decide on the advantage of further emergence."

"NO, no, no!" rang forth half a dozen voices in sharp disapproval; and, as Xanocles gracefully resigned the floor, one of the dissenters—a tall, stooped man with sallow face, fringed with a white beard—stepped down to express his views.

"Citizens of Atlantis," he declared, in a voice surprisingly resonant and vigorous for one of his age, "I have lived long enough to follow the debates of a hundred years, but never have I heard such folly as has just been advised. Under the influence of Agripides, Atlantis has been beautiful, and it has been happy—and what more can life give us than happiness and beauty? Would you let yourselves be stampeded by the ravings of these modernists, who would trample on every sacred thing, seeking a panicy escape from some imaginary peril, or misled by a childish lust for adventure or romance? Take an old man's word, in all the upper world there can be no romance like that spread beneath our green-glass dome, and no adventure like that of our golden-illumined ways. Agripides was right, my friends, perhaps more marvelously right than even he could have known; for Atlantis can remain Atlantis only so long as the corrupting influence of the world is excluded; only so long as we are protected from those bickerings, greedy

strivings and ruinous stupidities that must beset all men on an earth, which are things too vast to control and too diversified to understand. Need I do more than to remind you that already the first shock of contact with the upper world has almost shattered the foundations of Atlantis, and left us all momentarily in acute danger and fear?"

And the old man ceased, and stalked majestically back to his seat, while the nods and murmurs of approval showed how favorably he had been received. Evidently the Submergence Party had scored, and scored heavily; and therefore the time seemed ripe for the address which I had prepared.

I had no difficulty in gaining the floor; and after a few remarks expressing my sympathy with the ends if not with the methods of the Submergence Party, I launched into the main body of my speech.

"You are all building without ample knowledge," said I. "And that must necessarily be so, for what can you have learned of the upper world? But it happens that I, thanks to some years of experience, do know a little of the upper world; and it is because of this that I venture to address you on behalf of the policy of Emergence."

I paused momentarily, to pave the way for my next point; and I observed that hundreds of pairs of eyes were straining toward me, in a silence so intense that one might have heard the dropping of the proverbial pin.

"I shall not dwell upon the merely physical advantages of my own world," I continued. "I shall not describe its wide spaces and splendid vistas, its tree-mantled valleys and sun-burnished lakes, its uproarious white-splashed oceans and billowy mountains, dark with forest or glittering with the snow. I shall not linger over the tingling freshness of starry winter nights, the feathery softness of the spring, the enchantment of firefly-haunted glades or of the ever-shifting skies, with their fragile blue or gray or burning sunset red. I shall not discourse upon these sights, for even in the upper world they are but little noted, save by an occasional nature crank or poet.

"But what I shall strive to make plain are those advantages familiar to every thinking citizen of the earth. Let me begin, for example, by picturing the life of the typical dweller in our greatest city. Not only in his home but in his work he enjoys the benefits of the most progressive civilization ever known. To begin with, his dwelling may be of any type that accords with his means and capacity, for if he likes high places and can afford them, he may enjoy the privilege of looking down upon his neighbors from the eleventh story; or, if he prefers exercise, he may walk up to the sixth floor whenever he goes home; or, again, if he be of a sluggish disposition, he may take lodgings at street level—and all without extra charge.

"Now let me depict the daily routine of such a man. After being aroused in the morning by a wonderful little clock that is almost human in its faithfulness to habit, he slips hastily into his clothes and consumes a breakfast perhaps featured by refrigerated beefsteak grown half a world away, and by coffee mixed with the condensed milk of cows that lived far away and long ago. Having thus fortified himself against the day's exigencies, he loses no time about leaving the house; and, in company with thousands as fortunate as himself, he enters a little hole in the ground, and twenty minutes or half an hour later emerges from another and precisely similar hole five or ten miles away. But this is the least of his conveniences. After climbing from the second hole, he wedges his way into a little movable electric box in any of our downtown buildings, and promptly finds himself delivered opposite his office on the fifteenth or twentieth floor. He is now ready for the day's duties; and so marvelously simple is modern civilization that, no matter what those duties be, they are always the same.

"For there is only one task that seems worth while to the modern man, and that is the making of money. Just why money-making is so important is a question that I personally cannot answer; but it must be important indeed, for every one becomes involved in it, especially those who have more already than they know what to do with; and this is doubtless why modern civilization runs so smoothly, why the wheels turn so regularly in so many mills, the shafts are sunk so deeply in so many mines, the forests are cut so completely from so many mountain sides, and men continue to spread out and multiply despite battles, pestilences, labor wars, earthquakes, and explosions."

IN the latter part of my address I had rather lost control of myself, saying things I had not intended to say, things I did not exactly mean. But my enthusiasm carried me along irresistibly, and it was not until I was launched into mid-channel that I paused for a glimpse of my audience and observed the stares of amazement, the nods of incredulity and the frowns of repulsion with which my words were received. Then suddenly I was sorry, for now I remembered how once before I had damaged my own cause by dwelling indiscreetly upon the merits of the upper world. But though I was following the wrong track I did not know how to find the right one—for unless I described our industrial and mechanical progress, what was there for me to boast about? And so, face to face with an impassable barrier, I faltered midway in my address, hastily summarized, led up to a feeble peroration, and confusedly took my seat.

As I returned to Xanocles' side, a strained silence filled the air; and the shocked and even hostile glances of the audiences showed how gravely I had harmed the cause of Emergence.

But though I personally had failed, Xanocles was equal to the emergency. Springing to his feet during the momentary lull that followed my fiasco, he caught the attention of the chairwoman, and for the second time was accorded permission to address the meeting.

"Fellow citizens," he began, while the full attention of the assembled hundreds was focused upon him, "it deeply grieves me to hear of the deplorable state of affairs in the upper world. No doubt our friend has unconsciously exaggerated, for it is incredible that, after all these thousands of years, the unsubmerged races should still be so primitive as he has indicated. Yet we must accept his picture of conditions; we must reluctantly admit that our fellows on earth are still groping in the semi-savagery of the Age of Smoke and Iron, from which we Atlanteans escaped three thousand years ago.

"But does that mean that we should ignore the upper world? Does that mean that we, in the consciousness of our superiority, should not reach out a helping hand to our brothers? To forget them in their need would be unworthy of the disciples of Agripides! Indeed, it is because of the very limitations of the upper world that we must emerge!—it is because the people are so deeply in need of assistance! Let us show them the folly of their ways! Let us convert them to the wisdom of Atlantis! Let us teach them that steel and gold are but frail things after all! Let us send out our missionaries among them, and bring them the creed of Agripides! Do you not realize, fellow citizens,

that such an opportunity has never before been thrust at your door? For not only may you deliver the upper world from its barbarities and teach it a true culture, but you may show its peoples how to build glass walls and submerge as we have submerged!"

And in this wild vein Xanocles rambled on and on, while his hearers followed him with enthusiasm that seemed gradually to mount to the point of conviction.

Other arguments followed, which I will not weary the reader with repeating; and after all who desired it, had had their say, a vote was taken on Xanocles' emergence proposal.

To our great joy, the motion carried—carried by the decisive ratio of almost two to one! The moment of triumph, however, had not yet arrived; for, before the measure could become operative, it had to be approved by a referendum of all the Atlanteans.

That referendum, according to the law, could not be held for at least thirty days, the interval being considered necessary for discussion. Hence there ensued a most exciting thirty days for Xanocles and of expressing in apt and pointed terms. But the desire for discussion was particularly in evidence at the great assemblies held daily at the Hall of Public Enlightenment; and it was there that Xanocles and his fellow "Debating Delegates" of the Emergence Party made some of the most forceful and eloquent pleas I had ever heard; and their rivals of the Submergence group were scarcely less fervid in appealing for the time-honored policies. These activities, I need hardly point out, were not confined to one city, but were participated in by all the eighteen cities of Atlantis; and numerous speakers from outside points would arrive to address the gatherings in Archeon, while occasionally Xanocles or some other leader would leave to speak in neighboring towns.

Not least eager among the fighters for Emergence were the thirty-nine members of the Upper World Club. Indeed, it is certain that none of the older members could have outdone us in enthusiasm or determination. For we had more than an abstract principle at stake—our entire future lay in the balance.

And the utter helplessness of their plight—and of ours—became tragically apparent when suddenly a great elongated gray mass came flying in with the torrents from the sea—a rescuing submarine that had been hurled in through the gap in the wall!

myself, as well as for all members of the parties of Emergence and Submergence. Never in the past three thousand years had so fundamental an issue been brought before the people; for the first time since the Good Destruction, the basic principles of Agripides were at stake!

Since there were no newspapers in Atlantis, at least one agency of political excitement was lacking. But there were other agencies in abundance. Never—with the exception of those dreadful days following the discovery of the crack—had I seen the Atlanteans so agitated. In all the houses and meetings that I visited, the chief topic of conversation was the proposed "Emergence Act"; every one was anxious to deliver his opinion, and every one —— man and woman alike, —— seemed to have an opinion, which he was capable

And while I personally was not eager to return to earth just now (being detained by thought of a certain fair-haired, blue-eyed woman), yet most of my comrades were almost passionately anxious to escape, for as time went by they found themselves more and more out of place in this too-perfect land, and increasingly unable to perform the duties required of them as citizens of Atlantis.

But if they were dissatisfied with the Sunken World and incapable of making any contribution to Atlantean culture, they proved very competent when it came to helping the cause of Emergence. Few of them were sufficiently skilled in the language to speak in public (Captain Gavison was an exception, and several times expressed himself forcefully and to good effect); but they were all adepts at private electioneering, and they

would stop every Atlantean they could inveigle into conversation and plead the cause of Emergence. Frequently, indeed, they did more harm than good; and I remember that Stranahan repeated my own error, and frightened away several prospective emergionists by boastfully describing the magnitude of wars in the upper world; and once I overheard Rawson draw an involuntary cry of disgust from a hearer, when he tactlessly decanted upon the advantages of airplanes as bomb throwers. But on the whole the men were well coached by members of the Emergence party, and knew enough to confine themselves to describing the beauty of the upper world! Partly because of their aid, but chiefly by virtue of the vigorous campaign being conducted in all the four corners of Atlantis, we had hopes that our revolutionary measure was to become law.

CHAPTER XXX

Crucial Moments

AN election in Atlantis was seldom accompanied by intense excitement. There was no registration, for all citizens were permanently enrolled with the population bureau; on election day all the men and women of voting age (which means all who had passed their High Initiation) appeared quietly at the designated polling places to cast a secret ballot, or else —if they preferred—they sent in their vote in writing two or three days earlier. The election boards then slowly counted the votes, and the fate of the measure (for laws were the only things passed on by the voters of Atlantis) was disclosed at the Hall of Public Enlightenment.

But the Emergence proposal proved an exception to the rule. Not a little agitation was apparent among the men and women thronging to the election chambers; and this agitation was heightened by the members of the Upper World Club, who used earthly political tactics by accosting the voters before they reached the polls and showering them with final arguments and pleas. It is doubtful whether these eleventh hour efforts had any effect, and, indeed, the results showed that they might have been spared; but at the time we felt that our exertions had not been in vain, and during the election and the days of suspense that followed, we remained unwarrentedly hopeful.

Then came the disillusioning blow. After three days, the election results were announced in the Hall of Public Enlightenment. Out of more than a third of a million votes cast in all Atlantis, our party had polled nearly a hundred and fifty thousand—yet had failed by many thousands to equal the Submergence total.

Even so, we were not wholly discouraged. As Xanocles pointed out, the cause of Emergence had never before been able to attract one-tenth as many voters; and we had reason to hope that we would eventually bring the majority to our side. And no sooner had the news of our defeat reached us than we began to plan for further campaigns, for we were determined not to abandon the fight so long as we had breath with which to wage it.

Yet in one respect, I was already regretting my connection with the Emergence Party. My regrets, to be sure, arose from purely non-political motives, and could not make me alter my allegiance; but they were none the less deep-rooted. To my surprise and chagrin, I found that my campaigning activities were bringing me into disfavor with Aelios. As one of Agripides' staunch admirers and a devoted member of the Party of Submergence, she looked with growing disapproval upon my association with Xanocles and his kind; and during those little conferences, which we had for the supposed purpose of discussing my "History of the Upper World," she would take occasion to reprove me mildly and even to suggest that my conduct savored of disloyalty.

Of course, I would plead my right as a citizen to espouse any political cause that appealed to me; but she would nod gravely with dissent. "Theoretically you may have the right," she would remind me, "but don't you think you are showing remarkably bad taste? Remember, you came into our land uninvited, and have been freely received as one of us, and given citizenship and all the privileges of a native. And how do you show your appreciation? By taking sides with the party that would undermine our institutions; by doing all you can to wreck the very country that succored you."

To this I would reply that I had no intention of wrecking the country; that I was trying to further its interests according to my own lights. And Aelios, while not convinced that my own lights were the right ones, would at least admit that my motives were sincere; and having reached this halfway point of agreement, we would invariably turn to less provocative subjects.

But despite her disapproval of my Emergence views, I had reason to be encouraged by her attitude toward me. I saw her, while not often, at least often enough to be assured of her friendship; and now and then I caught in her eyes a bright, warm light which intimated that what she felt might be more than friendship. Yet it may merely have been that my desires passed judgment for me, for not by a word or a gesture did she give evidence that she regarded me otherwise than as one kindly disposed human being may regard another; and the occasional hints of some gentler emotion were so rare and so fleeting that I could not be sure. And so, as best I could, I restrained my impatience, at first never seriously believing that I could aspire to her height, then gradually fanning faint hopes that remained concealed beneath the mantle of my diffidence. It was long before we even approached the subject of love; and meanwhile, we would speak of impersonal things, or personal things securely buried in the past, and nothing in my words would give hint of the passion flaming to life within me, while in her words I saw the traces only of a vivid and beauty-loving mind serenely unconscious of sex.

BUT even in Atlantis it was impossible that we should continue to see one another and yet retain a merely placid brother-and-sister attitude. How it was with her I do not know, but I was the son of a world whose passions burn gustily and strong; and I was becoming almost painfully obsessed with the thought of her, and would be given to long fits of melancholy in her absence, while at times in her presence I would be tantalized by her passionless calm, and would feel the old sweet primitive prompting to slip my arms about her, and enfold her as one might enfold the Ultimate. But always I would restrain myself, for how be sure of the reaction of this daughter of an alien civilization? How be sure that embraces and caresses would not be repulsive to the Atlanteans? And so, though possessed by the thought of her, as by some exquisite perfume that provokes and allures, I repressed my eagerness for many, many months, awaiting that opportunity which in the end, I felt sure, time and circumstance must provide.

And in the end my patience was rewarded, and I was favored unexpectedly by one of those occasions

which life, if left quietly to itself, seems usually to offer to lovers.

It was after one of my rare and delightful afternoons with Aelios, that the supreme event occurred. We had been strolling together about the city, and had gone for a moment's rest into the "Temple of the Stars," that majestic edifice in which Rawson and I had been trapped so long before. Seated on a stone bench in the darkness, we gazed awe-stricken at the spectacle above us—the whole glittering panorama of the night-skies, almost as I had beheld them so many times on earth. And as I peered up at the image of those heavens I could hardly hope to see again, a sad and reminiscent mood came over me; I could fancy myself once more on earth, and was wistful for all that earth contained; I missed the friends I had known, the sparkle of the sunshine, the magnificence of white-throated mountains: I longed for the bluster and cannonade of tempests, the icy tingling of the snow, the splashing and foamy turbulence of the ocean. And Aelios, although she had never known these things and could scarcely imagine what they meant, was strangely responsive to my mood, and seemed even to feel my melancholy. She asked me gently about the world I had left, and how it felt to wander among the great cities of the earth, and how it felt to hear the purling of mountain brooklets or to sit on a grassy knoll with the great sun blazing in the blue above. And, remembering all that I had seen and heard before my captivity in Atlantis, I described to Aelios what my life had been, and told of my adventures and wanderings, my happy childhood and youth and early manhood; and I drew upon my imagination for gorgeous pictures of the upper world, and painted the home I had lost as little less than a Paradise.

"Ah, now I see why you've joined the Emergence Party," Aelios remarked, her face glowing dimly in the near-starlight, and her eyes soft with a kindly luster. "Of course, you must sometimes wish yourself back among all those wonderful scenes you left."

"Sometimes, indeed, I am sorry," said I, in low tones and reminiscently. "Sometimes I almost wish to be again in my native land. But there are other times when I am glad, very glad to be here, and when I would not go back to my own country if I could—not if you offered me the whole world."

"And when is that?" asked Aelios. "When you are in the beautiful buildings here, or look at the exquisite statuary?"

"Yes, sometimes then," I replied. "But not only then. There are other exquisite things that make me wish to stay."

"Yes, I can understand," she declared, apparently still innocent of the trend of my remarks. "The paintings, for example, or the colonnades, or——"

"No, not only that," I interrupted. "There is something more personal, more human—something that—" Here I hesitated, hardly able to proceed, for I realized that I was approaching an embarrassing climax.

"You mean then, that you like the people here?" she volunteered, still with perfect candor.

"Yes, indeed I like the people!" I vowed, fervently. "And one person in particular!"

If this remark had been intended to evoke a telltale reply, it was to fail signally. "Oh, I am glad you are so attached to your friends!" she responded, whether innocently or with calculating cleverness I could not say, since the darkness concealed any blush that may have suffused her face.

"But don't you understand, Aelios?" I persisted. "Don't you know whom in particular I mean?"

The note of surprise in her answer was either genuine or else was born of remarkably skilful acting. "How should I know whom you mean? Am I with you often enough to know all your friends?"

She was making matters difficult for me. But, having reached this tactical position, I was determined not to surrender. "Why, Aelios," I countered, "whom should you imagine that I have for my particular friend? Whom but yourself?

"Myself?" she repeated, in sheer astonishment. "Myself?"

FOR a moment there was silence; but this time I felt that there could be no doubt about the blush that mounted to her face. And at length she turned to me with softly, smoldering eyes and the assurance of victory entered my heart and then swiftly receded as she murmured, bashfully, "I am pleased, very much pleased, to know you feel that way. It is a great compliment to me, and I am very proud—for nothing in Atlantis is held more precious than friendship."

"Oh, but it is not only friendship!" I remonstrated, wondering if it were possible that she still misunderstood. "It's not only friendship, Aelios! It is love!"

"Love?" she echoed, in low tones of surprise; and another long silence followed, while I waited eagerly for the words that did not come, and she averted her head so that not even the dimly glowing eyes were visible. Then, when the suspense was becoming embarrassing, I found hesitating speech, which gradually grew more fluent and assured; and all the pent-up emotions of months welled forth and forced a passionate torrent from my tongue, so vehement as to surprise even myself. I told her how immeasurably dear she had become; how she had been for me the central light of all this strange world; how she had soothed my loneliness, dispersed my despair, and given me hope and a reason for living; how my life could have meaning and beauty only if she had a share in it, while without her all things would be desolate and blank. All this and much more I poured forth in an eager rhapsody, not pausing to reflect that I was but repeating the sentiments of a million lovers; and the strength of my feelings perhaps lent wings to my commonplace words, and gave them a power that no analysis could reveal. Or perhaps it was that Atlantean lovers never expressed themselves as do lovers on earth; for even in the darkness I was aware that Aelios was listening, listening intently, listening almost with a breathless interest, as though she had never heard or imagined words such as mine.

After I had finished, she seemed still held in some spell of speechlessness. For several tense seconds, slow-dragging portentous seconds that seemed minutes long, I waited for her to break silence. But when her response came, it was in passionless tones that contrasted oddly with my emotion; and with an accentuation so feeble as to resemble a whisper, she declared, "All this that you say seems strange to me, very, very strange. You speak of love, but I fear I do not understand. Perhaps love in your land is not the same as here, for I am sure that what you speak of is not what we would call love."

"And what would you call love?" I asked.

"It is something that hardly needs a name. It is like none of those momentary attachments that men and women sometimes feel. It is something that wraps one's whole being in a mighty flame, and is born chiefly of a kinship of the mind and heart; and when it comes, it need not be much spoken of, but can never be forgotten or lost."

"That's just what I feel toward you, Aelios!" I assured her, fervently.

"But I do not know if it is what I feel toward you," she returned, simply. "I do not know—I cannot yet be sure."

"But you think that perhaps—that perhaps sometime—" I gasped, wild hope springing to life within me.

"Yes, perhaps sometime—I cannot say," she murmured, slowly.

But in her tones was the assurance of that which her expressed words denied; and, with the exultation of unlooked for success, I at last flung myself free of restraint, and my arms found their way about her slim, resisting form.

But somehow she slipped free of my clasp, and stood dimly outlined before me in the shadows, herself no more than a shadow in this unreal world.

"Not yet, my lover, not yet," she forbade, in gentle tones that gave no indication of the hurt feelings I had feared.

"But when, Aelios?" I demanded, baffled, but far from discouraged. "When—when may we get married?"

"Not yet, not yet for a while—if ever," she decided. "We must wait, we must wait until we are both quite certain." She paused, then added casually, "Besides, remember, you have a duty to perform—an all-important duty with which neither your own pleasure nor your love must interfere."

"But what after I have performed that duty? What after my work is completed? Will you then—"

"I will then be willing to listen to you again," was all she would vouchsafe. "Come, let us be going now."

And she started for the door, while I followed awkwardly, since she knew the way much better than I. And, once outside, she began speaking impersonally about the art of the colonnades and marble galleries, and seemed to have forgotten entirely the subject that had been absorbing us. But in her eyes was an unusual sparkle, and in her cheeks an unwonted glow; and after I had left her and she had gone tripping out of sight, I pursued my way thoughtfully homeward, my steps made buoyant by a hope I once would not have dared to entertain.

CHAPTER XXXI

"The History of the Upper World"

I HAD been in Atlantis two years before I had completed my "History of the Upper World." Considering the magnitude of the task, it surprises me now to remember that I finished it so quickly, for not only was it longer than three average-sized volumes, but I was retarded by writing it in an adopted tongue and by having to work exclusively from memory and without reference books other than the Atlantean dictionaries. But six or seven hours of daily application is certain to show results even though one works slowly:

It was indeed a proud day, and yet a day of many doubts, when I bore the finished manuscript to the office of the Literary Registrar. This official, assisted by a board of fifteen recognized writers and critics, passed upon all literary works submitted by the authors of Atlantis; and all books found worthy of perpetuation were published under his direction, while unstinted advice and criticism was given to promising aspirants. In the case of my own book, there could be no doubt as to publication, for not only had I been specifically directed to write it, but all Atlantis was eagerly awaiting the information it was expected to convey. None the less, it had to undergo the regular procedure of inspection by the Registrar; and, as it happened, this was more than a fruitless formality. Before the manuscript was given to the press a trained essayist was appointed to help me reconstruct the style; and, thanks to his assistance, my writing attained a dignity and polish I myself could never have supplied.

But when at last the publication of the book was ordered, I had good reason to be gratified. An edition of fifty thousand was to be issued—an edition of phenomenal size considering that the population of Atlantis was only half a million.

Naturally, I sought to know the reason for this enormous printing; and I learned much as to book distribution in the Sunken World. Publication, like all other activities, was solely in the hands of the government; and copies of all the hundreds of books issued each year were sent as a matter of course to every library in the land. Moreover, every citizen was permitted his choice of any fifty of the year's books, the receipt of which was considered not a privilege but a right; and men and women engaged in research work were allowed in excess of fifty if they made plain their need of the additional volumes. In the case of my own book, public interest was at such a pitch, that a large percentage of the people were certain to include it among their chosen fifty; and the first edition was therefore regarded as conservative in size rather than excessive.

So, in fact, it proved. The book was hardly off the press when orders began to pour in so rapidly that a second edition of fifty thousand had to be prepared. For it was literally true that every one was reading "The History of the Upper World"; and when I say every one, I do not mean one man out of every hundred, as might be the case were I writing on the earth; I mean that there was actually not a person of reading age who did not feel bound to acquaint himself with the contents of my book.

In consequence, I found my life taking on a tinge of unwonted excitement. The notoriety of successful authorship was mine—and the satisfaction of one who finds himself the center of a storm of his own creation. For it was with a start of surprise, a gasp of incredulity and a wail of horror that Atlantis read the news of the upper world. Previously, when I had let loose a few hints as to life on earth, I had witnessed some curious reactions; but the former bewilderment and disgust of the people now seemed insignificant by comparison. It would be impossible to convey any idea of their repugnance to earthly life as I portrayed it; it was almost as if they had learned that we had gone back on all fours, or had joined the orang-utan and the gibbon in the trees; and the dozens of letters I received, the dozens of visitors that poured in upon me, and the dozens of inquiries addressed to me at public meetings, all gave evidence of a single but profound emotion: a sense of wonder and of revulsion at the degeneracy of the upper world.

Perhaps the clearest proof of the general attitude was to be seen in the reviews of the book—reviews which, unlike earthly criticism, were not printed, but were delivered orally before gatherings at the Hall of Public Enlightenment.

LET me quote, for example, from a typical address. The speaker was Thermanides, a well known writer on social and philosophic questions; and his views regarding the upper world were milder in many ways than those of his audience. Speaking before an assemblage of four or five hundred, he showed him-

self to be precise and thorough in his acquaintance with my book.

"Since we have no reason to believe that the author has deliberately exaggerated," he declared, after summarizing the contents, "we must accept the picture of upper world life as he presents it. And what, therefore, must we conclude? That Agripides was wise, wonderfully wise, when he urged us to submerge. There can hardly be any more distressing subject than the history of the earth; even the most daring satirist, playing upon his imagination to expose the stupidity of the human race, could not offer a blacker picture of follies, crimes and inanities than Anson Harkness has painted for us in all seriousness. For what do we find to be the outstanding historical facts as he depicts them? Has the human race gone continuously forward, forgetting its savage instincts in perfecting a civilization at once beautiful and secure?—has man come to look on man otherwise than as beast looks on beast?—or has society come to be composed of nothing more than a clothed jungle pack? No, my friends—unfortunately no, if we would believe the volume before us. Slave-raids and wars; rebellions and murders; conquest and persecution; treachery and rapine and wholesale exploitation; dynasties that crumble and empires that decompose—these are the sign-posts of the past three thousand years; and evidently there has been no concerted or intelligent effort to create other and less revolting landmarks.

"Yet though the darkness seems impenetrable, I can see one faint glimmer of hope. In the self-satisfied blindness of the upper world reposes the possible solution. It is not a solution altogether pleasing to contemplate, but it is the sort of cleansing remedy that nature will sometimes provide when a wound has festered beyond possibility of healing. For if no ordinary cure be attainable, life will sometimes take the sword into her own hands, and with one blow wipe out all her old mistakes, and with one blow bring annihilation. It is that stroke which, it seems to me, is about to fall upon the upper world man, smiting his rancorous and lopsided civilization, and turning against his own throat that knife with which he thinks to gouge out the eyes of his foe. And this is perhaps well, my friends, for after earthly man has committed suicide, the world will be ready for a population of less shortsighted and quarrelsome creatures, be they only beetles or ants!"

And with a thankful gesture, as of one who lectures on the impending extinction of cannibalism, the speaker returned to his seat; while, much to my chagrin, I noted that his words had apparently found high favor with his audience. And those that arose in the ensuing discussion were not less narrow-minded than the principal reviewer himself; they seemed to imagine that my book had been intended as a sort of catalogue of horrors instead of as a restrained and veracious history; and either they suggested that I must have exaggerated hopelessly, or else they agreed that the upper world was so decadent that a second "Good Destruction" would be desirable. "Blood-curdling," "Sepulchral," "An able story of depravity and crime," "The last word in thrills and terror"—these were some of the expressions used by the various commentators; and, to judge from their remarks, one might have thought that I had written a popular novel of mystery and murder instead of a sober history.

But while all Atlantis was reading the book and being provoked and shocked by my most commonplace statements, I was surprised to observe one effect which I deplored even more than the gross misunderstanding of upper world standards and ideals. For the "History" had acted like a bombshell against the Party of Emergence! Deserters from our standards were now legion, and in a few weeks we had lost all that we had gained following the discovery of the crack in the wall. It was as if the people had been frightened by my picture of the lands above seas, frightened so that they wished to shun all contact with the earth as they might shun things unclean and evil; and despite all that Xanocles and the other Emergence leaders could do, it was impossible to shake the masses free of this ridiculous attitude. At a test vote of an Emergence measure two months after the appearance of the "History of the Upper World," we were defeated more decisively than even our foes had predicted, defeated by the overwhelming ratio of ten to one!—And, in my disappointment and self-accusing despair, I bitterly regretted that I had not written my book from a less realistic point of view, for I knew that nothing short of a catastrophe or a miracle could now open up the lanes back to the earth.

CHAPTER XXXII

A Happy Consummation

NOT many months after the publication of the "History of the Upper World" there occurred a vastly more important event. At least, it was vastly more important to me, and constituted the most fortunate episode of all my life in Atlantis. Ever since that encouraging talk with Aelios in "The Temple of the Stars," I had been drawing gradually nearer to her; and by slow and unconscious degrees, so subtle that we ourselves could hardly note the change, we seemed to be entering upon the rôle of lovers. There was no emotional demonstration, and no deliberate reference to love, for in Atlantis it was considered undignified to express any casual amorous sentiments; but at times, in her eyes I would catch that reassuring look I had noted at rare intervals before, and in our increasingly frequent meetings, her manner seemed to be tinged by something indefinably wistful and yet indefinably gentle, that I had not previously observed.

It might be imagined that the appearance and wide discussion of my book would have had an adverse effect upon her; but, fortunately, I had shown her many chapters before publication, and the contents were no surprise to her. And while she was at one with her people in loathing the upper world, she could hardly blame me for the conditions I depicted. Indeed, she was soon to give proof that she did not consider me in the least a partner in the supposed backwardness of my race.

I do not now recall the precise circumstances that led up to the climax; I only know that it was on one of my numerous visits to her home, when we were alone together in the tapestried room of the pale blue lanterns. Nothing had suggested to me in advance that our interview today was to differ from our previous interviews, and certainly nothing could have suggested such a thought to her; but somehow the conversation drifted into unexpected channels, and we found ourselves provocatively near the subject of love; and somehow her words (though I cannot now remember their trend) stirred up all my checked and slumbering emotions, forced down the barriers of my reserve, filled me with a sudden and unlooked for courage, and urged my lips to frame words that I had not premeditated then. And almost as much to my own surprise as to hers, I found myself proposing that she marry me!

But was my rashness appropriately punished? Far from it. What was my amazement, and what my

delight, when she looked up at me with trustful, grave blue eyes and quietly consented!

And yet it all seemed so simple that it might have been an everyday occurrence! She had taken my proposal almost as a matter of course, almost as if she had expected it; but at the same time the exalted and happy light in her eyes showed that she was far from indifferent.

"I was not sure before," she murmured, simply, after my first rapturous exclamations. "But now I am quite certain. We will be all in all to one another, will we not, my beloved?"

I forgot just how I replied; I have an impression that my arms performed some lively antics, with Aelios as their goal, and that anything I said must have been merely incidental.

"When shall the day be, Aelios?" I asked, when I was again in a mood for discussion. "When do you say?"

"When do you want me to say?" she returned, as though surprised at my query. "If we are both sure, what is the use of delaying?"

And, by dint of further questioning, I learned that long engagements were unknown in Atlantis. Although usually so slow-going and leisurely, the natives seemed to me singularly hasty in this one regard; and once two people had decided upon marriage, it was not customary to allow more than the few days' interval necessary for the preparations. It had always been so in Atlantis, Aelios explained, and she could not imagine how it could be otherwise, for why subject the young couple to the unnatural tension of waiting, and why make love ridiculous by arbitrarily starving it?

Previously, when I had dared to think of the possibility of marriage with Aelios, I had half reconciled myself to the prospect of a long engagement, since observation had taught me nothing of Atlantean marriage customs, and I had imagined that an interval at least of months, might be considered proper. And so I was a little bewildered by the unexpected imminence of our union; I was like a man who, long blind, has suddenly beheld a flash of light; and it took me a little while to adjust myself to the startling new unfolding vistas.

TO begin with, I was not sure quite what was expected of me. Should I present Aelios with a ring or similar trinket such as was customary on earth? or was some more elaborate gift deemed necessary? In my perplexity, I consulted Xanocles, who merely smiled at my doubts. "Marriage with us," he explained, "is not treated as a form of barter; nor is it a bargain wherein precious articles must be given as sureties. We have long ago stamped out of our marriage system all traces of its primitive origin—all traces of that old custom which regarded it merely as a contract of sale, and which in the beginning demanded the parental receipt of cattle or other material property, and later required rings or similar baubles as a tender of the purchase price if not as a pledge of good faith. When two of our people are married, they would consider it degrading to be expected to give anything beyond themselves."

But even after I had been relieved on this important subject, there was still much that troubled me. Aelios had decided that but eight days were to intervene before the ceremony (this being about the usual time); and, despite all my joyous anticipations, I trembled just a little at the thought that I was so soon to exchange my known if monotonous bachelor life for an unknown career as Atlantean husband. But, fortunately, my hours were so completely occupied that I had little chance to be disturbed by doubts. For one thing, I spent a great deal of time with Aelios; for another thing, I was much entertained by my friends, who were astonished and yet loudly congratulatory upon hearing the news, and insisted upon putting me through long ordeals of questions, laughter, and amiable chaffing remarks. An entire meeting of the Upper World Club was given over to a celebration alleged to be in my honor; and President Gavison, after unbending from his official sternness to wish me luck in terms that I thought just a little wistful and a little reminiscent of his own lost happiness, was followed in quick succession by the various other club members, all of whom strove to express themselves with appropriate levity. Had there been such a thing as an intoxicant in Atlantis, I am sure that we would have had a merry old time; but, for lack of the proper stimulants, the men had to be content with their questionable jests, with poking me mirthfully in the ribs, with slapping me heartily on the back, with expressing the wish that they might be in my shoes (or, rather, sandals, since these were the only footwear in Atlantis), and with laughing and guffawing in a generally irresponsible and uproarious manner.

But as the few remaining days slid by, did I have no thought of her whom I had left on earth? Did I not think of Alma Huntley, she to whom I had once pledged devotion? Perhaps I should be ashamed, but I am not, to say that the memory of her scarcely entered my mind. She was no more than a shadow in a world that was daily growing more shadowy, in an existence I had outlived and could not expect to reenter; and if at times she would obtrude herself before me like a dim melancholy presence without color or form, such occasions were growing increasingly rare; and now that Aelios seemed so near and our two lives were so soon to be fused, Alma was obscured as a pale star is obscured by the sunlight; and all the torrents of my being welled up tumultuously toward Aelios, and it seemed as if her companionship and her love were the only love or companionship I had ever known or desired.

And how near I was to enjoying that companionship for life became vividly apparent to me about three days after we had reached our decision. Then it was that Aelios and I, in accordance with the custom of the land, visited the local housing bureau, which was to assign us to our new lodgings. After we had duly placed our names side by side in a great venerable-looking ledger wherein all the wedded couples of the past hundred years were enrolled, we passed an exciting afternoon in the company of the chief housing representative, who showed us all the available dwelling places with the same obliging courtesy as when I had selected my bachelor quarters. As on the former occasion, there were so many desirable locations that the choice was difficult; and on passing each new threshold, Aelios would pause with a little cry of wonder or surprise, and would point in admiration to some distinctive feature of arrangement or decoration. Needless to say, I too was dazzled and delighted; particularly since I had previously seen only apartments designed for single people. None of these homes were very large; indeed, most of them had but three or four rooms in addition to the roof sleeping chambers and the almost invariable central court; but they were the most home-like little nooks one could imagine, and were made attractive not only by the lawns and flowering gardens that surrounded them, but by their tastefully furnished rooms, whose lamps and tapestries and statuary were never too lavish or ornate and yet

always gave an effect at once picturesque and cozy.

Our choice was in favor of a little butterfly-shaped dwelling, with silvery walls inlaid with mother-of-pearl and high-arched windows surrounded by vivid bands of stained glass. The interior appeared entrancing to us both, for not only were the walls and ceilings frescoed as though by a master hand, but the painted designs were matched by the very rugs on the floor and the draperies that screened the doorways; while a little statue-lined fountain that bubbled perpetually in the court fascinated us both by its rainbow glimmering showers of spray.

"You may move in any time after your names are registered in the Marriage Book," said the housing representative, when we had notified him of our decision and he had duly recorded it. "But if ever you should find this house unsatisfactory, you have only to enter your complaint, and if possible we will provide you with another dwelling. But meanwhile this will be regarded as your official residence."

AND with these words the housing representative bowed a gracious retreat, while Aelios and I were left to inspect the home that was so soon to be ours.

With the enthusiasm of children we examined every nook and corner, growing constantly more excited as our search proceeded. Aelios was radiant; I had never seen her eyes sparkle more brightly, her cheeks glow more vividly; and I realized as never before how extraordinarily fortunate I was.

And it seemed as if her emotions corresponded with mine! "Is it not the strangest whim of fate," she asked, "that you have come down here to me, my beloved? How easily I might have missed you! How easily we might each have gone through life not knowing that the other existed!"

"So it has been with all lovers since the world began," I returned. "Even in Atlantis, love must always seem a miracle."

"Even in Atlantis, it always is a miracle," she amended; and she looked up at me with a smile so luminous and trustful, so kindly and so tinged with a rapturous emotion, that I could not but admit that she was right.

The days that followed this delightful interview are but a blur in my memory. Although every hour was slow-footed with the suspense and the waiting, it seems to me that but a moment elapsed between our departure from our chosen home and our happy return . . . the intervening events are all obscured by that never-to-be-forgotten morning when Aelios and I entered the office of the Local Adviser and were officially united.

The actual ceremony was insignificant—indeed, there was no ceremony at all. We had merely to record our names for a second time, writing them in the Marriage Book which the housing representative had mentioned—an enormously thick volume bound in blue and gold, with thousands of pages, of which one was devoted to the history of each marriage. There were no questions asked us; there were no high-sounding formulas to be spoken by clockwork; there were no official representatives of saintliness to offer dogmatic advice; there were no vows to be taken, no promises to be made, no witnesses to gape or snicker, no pompous giving or receiving of the bride. We merely furnished the State with that record which it required, and did so without having to purchase a preliminary printed tag by way of permission; and after we had entered our names in the book, we were not insulted with any attempt to sanctify proceedings with words of antique witchcraft, nor humiliated by any implication that our own feelings would not amply solemnize the day.

Of course, if we desired to celebrate our nuptials with a festival of any sort, that was our privilege—a privilege which the State would recognize by providing an appropriate hall for the day. And, as it happened, most bridal couples availed themselves of this right: We were no exception, for when our marriage had been officially recorded, we repaired to a flower-decked chamber where a few of Aelios' friends and relatives were awaiting us. And after receiving greetings and congratulations, we did not pass our time in feasting or drinking, nor in making merry nor in riotous jests; but we danced for a while a sedate dance timed to ethereal strains of music; and later we all sat quietly about the room, Aelios at my side and the others on mats and sofas opposite, while the lights were subdued, and we listened to a still more ethereal music, which rose and quavered in a voice of joy like the notes of melodious birds, then faintly trilled like a far-off elfin call or throbbed and sang in an organ-burst of ecstasy, until one was moved almost to tears by the revealed poignancy and beauty of life, and came to look upon love with a new reverence and a new wonder.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Flood Gates Open

WHEN I look back now upon my life in Atlantis, my sojourn there seems to divide itself into two periods, of which the longer and by far the more tranquil, dates from my union with Aelios. In the new-found contentment of our marriage—and ours was no exception to the rule—we seemed to lose track of time; and months and years began gliding by at a smooth and even pace that was particularly deceptive because there were no seasons to mark the change and there were no outstanding events to serve as landmarks.

Perhaps the secret lay in the fact that Aelios and I were both amply occupied; for in the hours when we were not together, we each had our own work to keep us busy. Aelios still tutored for several hours a day, and still led in the dances at public festivals; for in Atlantis no distinction was made between a married and a single woman, except in the event of motherhood; and even a mother, while released from her prescribed duties, was expected to keep alive a broad interest in life, by performing some optional services.

For my own part, I was no less busy than Aelios, for after I had completed my "History of the Upper World," I had again been summoned by the Committee on Selective Assignments, and had been directed to write a treatise on "Social Traditions and Institutions in the Upper World," wherein I might describe conditions above seas in greater detail than in my previous book. This task, although far from uncongenial, was proving both lengthy and laborious, for I tried to cover every modern country; and the further I proceeded the harder the work became, for the more I learned of Atlantis the more difficult it appeared to represent the earth in a light that was not merely pitiable.

I was now quite reconciled to passing my remaining days in Atlantis. Although Xanocles and his colleagues persisted with their agitation, the cause of Emergence was dwindling in my mind to an impossible dream; and, had it not been for the cataclysm which aroused us all to frenzied action, I might have been content to grow gray and wrinkled in the Sunken

World. For now that Aelios was mine, I found that life was far richer than ever bfeore; that not only was I steeped in pleasurable activity amid a delightful environment, but that there was an almost charmed absence of strain and hurry, and a leisure and serenity that would once have seemed the attributes only of a Nirvana.

It is true, of course, that I could not escape all the ordinary physical ills of life. Once, for example, when my awkwardness betrayed me in an athletic contest and I suffered a broken arm, I was conducted to a State hospital, where a State physician skilfully treated my injury; and once when the incessant golden glare began to tell upon my eyes, I had to visit a State oculist, who relieved the strain by prescribing a pair of wide-rimmed amber-tinged glasses.

My appearance was changing, moreover, in other ways than the mere addition of glasses. I was acquiring a long beard, largely owing to the habit formed during my first days in Atlantis; and my complexion was taking on a curious greenish tint, due to some peculiar action of the Atlantean light—an action to which the Atlanteans themselves had inherited immunity. But I was not alone in my queer pistache complexion; there were exactly thirty-eight others who could show the same distinctive pigmentation; and so marked was the coloration that, as the men sometimes declared, our origin was "written on our skins."

My fellow members of the Upper World Club meanwhile did not share my liking for Atlantis. As time went by, in fact, they seemed to care less and less for their adopted country. With the exception of Gavison, who had written a brief but popular treatise on "Navigation on Upper World Waters" and a not less popular "Comparison of Upper and Lower World Civilizations," there was not one of my former shipmates who was adapting himself to life in Atlantis or who was not remiss in his obligations as a citizen. While they had all acquired at least a rudimentary knowledge of the language and were all reasonably successful in performing some prescribed mechanical task for two or three hours a day, yet none of them had accomplished anything in any of those artistic or intellectual pursuits which alone were considered worth while in Atlantis. For how, indeed, could they hope to conform to the standards of a world that had so little in common with their own? Apparently the natives did not even expect them to conform, and tolerated lapses that would have been considered disgraceful in born Atlanteans; but they themselves appeared to feel that they were somehow inferior, somehow out of place; and much of their restlessness, and much of their longing to escape, is to be explained by the desire for a less ideal but more familiar mode of life.

CONSIDERING the eagerness with which my companions would have exchanged the ease of Atlantis for even the most strenuous labors and hardships of the earth, it seems ironic that the man ultimately chosen to emerge, was he whose marriage to an Atlantean had made him more than resigned to the Sunken World. My sole excuse is that the choice, when it fell upon me, was made wholly upon the suggestion of others, and occurred at a time of such acute public peril that the happiness or fate of individuals was as nothing.

For the hour was to come—and to come with startling suddenness—when a fateful writing was to glare from the walls of Atlantis. I had been in the Sunken World seven full years when the menace burst forth,

. . Almost before I realized that the ultimate moment had come, I found myself assisting Aelios up the half-submerged gangplank and on to the deck of the grim- low-lying, shadowy ship. . . . we mounted to the deck, cast a last glance at the darkness that hid the marble temples of Atlantis, and waved for the last time to the dim watching figures.

and I was not there seven days after it appeared . . . But in the interval I was a witness to scenes of such havoc, such horror, confusion and despair as I had never seen before and fervently hope I shall never see again.

It torments me now to recall that all that terror and all that irremediable loss might have been avoided, had we but heeded the advice of Peliades, Peliades who insisted that the crack in the wall had not been adequately repaired. . . .

But let me not anticipate. I must describe as dispassionately as I can those everwhelming events which descended like lightning to blast Atlantean life, and which are so disturbing even in memory that my pen trembles and my startled mind takes fresh alarm. Merely to try to record those distracting days and nights is to be obsessed as by an old madness; I can feel a paralyzing dread spreading once more through all my nerves; I can feel my brain grow numb, my eyes grow strained and distended, my arteries throb with delirious haste. And all the while confused visions come swarming across my mind—visions of roaring vigils by lamplit walls of glass, visions of huddled faces, weeping or praying or with terror-stricken eyes, visions of thundering waters, panicky flights, submerged temples and inundated plains; and it all seems like some nightmare I dreamt long ago, yet more vivid than any nightmare, for there are sobs and lamentations that echo even now in my memory, and pleading lips that shall never stir again, and agonized eyes that peer at me like phantoms which will not be exorcised.

Long before, in moments of aimless fancy, I had sought to picture to myself the end of the world; to imagine the consternation and horror of an earth maddened by dread of impending doom. But I had never thought that I myself would be the spectator of a crumbling universe . . .

As in the case of the crack in the wall years before, the danger appeared with devastating suddenness. One moment, all was tranquil; the next moment, the Sunken World was in a frenzy. I remember that one afternoon Aelios and I had gone to the Agripides Theatre to witness a performance of some sort (its precise nature has slipped from my mind); and it was at the close of the first act that the warning came. From the unexplained absence of the chorus that usually sang during intermissions, I might have suspected that something was wrong; but actually I was without misgivings until suddenly a great burnished, silvery horn—the horn of the Autophone!—was lifted quietly on the stage.

At this unexpected sight, a stab of alarm darted through me; Aelios seized my hand and held it as if for reassurance; the audience sat rigid and tense, like persons who behold a ghost. For an instant we heard no sound, except for the quick breathing of our neighbors; then the strained silence was broken by an uncanny hollow voice that issued sonorously as if from nowhere.

"A great misfortune has befallen," announced the unseen, in tones that sounded almost sepulchral. "The crack in the glass wall has re-appeared, but this time it is of more serious proportions than before."

The voice faltered for an instant and halted, while murmurs of dismay, terror and unbelief shuddered through the audience.

And in a more deliberate and even graver manner the speaker continued: "Late last evening our navigators observed that the Salty River was higher than usual; and an investigating party sent out to-day by the High Chief Adviser has discovered that the wall has actually given way at one point, and that the water is pouring in through a fissure several feet across. There is as yet no cause for despair, for the surplus water, while highly inconvenient, can be disposed of by the reserve capacity of our intra-atomic pumps, which are equipped for all ordinary emergencies and can discharge fifty per cent more than their usual delivery. But there is danger that the break will expand before repairs can be made; and for this reason the High Chief Adviser requests that you try to meet the situation courageously, and freely enlist your brains and your services till the peril is overcome."

IT would be impossible to convey any idea of the commotion which these words created. The people did indeed follow the High Chief Adviser's advice to be courageous, for there was no more than a hint of that panic which one might have expected. But there could be no further thought of the performance in the theatre. After an instant's chill silence, the audience arose with one accord; and men's faces were blanched and women could be heard muttering in fear as the crowd began pushing toward the exits. In their excitement, the people had forgotten their usual courtesy; and Aelios and I were shoved and jostled in a way that reminded me of the New York subways. It was all I could do not to lose track of her amid the mob; yet both of us were anxious not to be separated, particularly since the speechless eagerness of the throng, the sighs of women, the rapid breathing of men and our own fast-beating hearts, all served to fill us with grim forebodings.

Once out of the great theatre, the people were driven as by a common instinct toward the river. All seemed fearful of even a second's delay, as though our haste might repair the fractured wall!—and in a long, swiftly moving column, constantly augmented as we advanced, we followed the winding avenue that curved toward the waterfront. None of us spoke more than an occasional word; even Aelios was silent, but she clutched my arm with unwonted firmness, and looked up at me with eyes wherein apprehension alternated with a reassuring courage.

But there was no prop for courage in the sight that greeted us at the river bank. The stream, which previously had flowed five or six feet beneath the docks, was now not more than eight or ten inches below the level.

In speechless dismay we watched that broad, greenish-gray torrent go swishing and gurgling past. But what was there that we could do? Nothing—except to stand and gape helplessly at that swift-flowing, swollen stream. Indeed, we seemed worse than merely helpless, for as I stood there with Aelios amid that horror-faced crowd, I became conscious—as during that other crisis years before—that I was arousing a singular repulsion. My neighbors were edging away from me visibly; some were pointing toward me, or uttering half-suppressed oaths; I thought I heard some one ruefully mumbling something about "That foreigner" and something else about "The cause of all our troubles."

I would quickly have withdrawn with Aelios from that hostile throng, had I not chanced to observe a slim, gray form approaching from far upstream. With the speed of the swiftest racing craft it drew near, and in a few minutes was recognizable as an intra-atomic boat, akin to the one I had boarded years before. Much to my relief, it came to a rapid halt, drew up at the dock, and let down its gangplank. And as the crowd forced its way on to the docks, Aelios and I was not slow in finding seats for ourselves

for what was sure to prove an extremely exciting trip.

And exciting it was—far more exciting than we could have desired. We had been under way only a few minutes when the aspect of the river began to change disquietingly. Except for the current, it lost the character of a river entirely, and took on the appearance of a long lake! On both sides the water spread in a smooth-flowing sheet two or three miles broad; and above the surface in places stared clumps and clusters of vegetation, with here and there a miniature island; while several temples and colonnades stood with marble bases buried in the water, like the palaces of some aquatic goddess.

But if this overflow was alarming, the full extent of the disaster was not evident until we approached the glass wall itself. This time it did not require any searchlight to reveal the nature of the injury; our ears might have told us if our eyes had not—but our eyes had sufficient to report. As we strode along the little, clay path toward the wall, we became aware of a broad, gleaming, greenish expanse between—a sheet of water where all had been dry land! And into that sheet of water, with a continuous thunder equal to that of the floods from the river valve, a long, white torrent spurted in a gracefully curving jet, shooting outward hundreds of yards from the glass bulwark, and descending with a splashing as of some gigantic fountain. It was impossible to estimate the volume, except to say that it was enormous; nor could we see the nature or extent of the leak, since the intervening water forbade our close approach. But we observed how the overflow worked its way circuitously into the Salty River in a sort of channel of its own choosing; and occasional swift-moving lights, which even from our distance we could see flashing from beyond the glass, showed us that the repair ships were busy trying to seal up the crack. But from the beginning we knew how hopeless were their efforts—with their midget vessels and midget tools they were like ants trying to stem the floor of a Niagara. And the utter helplessness of their plight—and of ours—became tragically apparent when suddenly a great elongated, gray mass came flying in with the torrents from the sea, and fell with a splash and a clatter in a battered heap projecting above the waters—a rescuing submarine that had been hurled in through the gap in the wall!

CHAPTER XXXIV

Swollen Torrents

IT was five days later that I received the summons from the High Chief Adviser . . . and made ready for the most extraordinary of all my adventures.

In the interval, all Atlantis was in a state verging upon madness. The commotion created by the original discovery of the crack was insignificant beside the terror that now dominated every inhabitant. To say that the country seemed stricken with paralysis would be to understate the conditions; rather, it was driven to a dumb distraction, like some great beast that feels its foot in a trap. Only one thought was in anyone's mind, only one topic on anyone's lips; the people drifted hither and thither like phantoms, rushing back and forth between the cities and the spurting leak in the wall, sometimes engaged furtively in whispered discussions, on other occasions muttering half-audible prayers or withdrawing into themselves like men brought face to face with Fate. Some would hover near the offices of the High Chief Adviser, awaiting hopeful news that did not come; some would haunt the river banks, watching the swelling torrents go murmuring and whirling past; some would huddle together in small family groups, as though mortally afraid to lose sight of their dear ones; some would merely go pacing around like rats in a cage, scarcely heeding where they went, their white faces and harried eyes expressive of a dread they dared not mention.

But none—none who were not driven by the most stringent orders—were heeding their daily duties. For the first time in history, the cities were inadequately supplied with food; the official producers and distributors shared the general inertia, and the people had to clamor at the doors of the great municipal warehouses for their meager rations; and actual starvation seemed certain unless the workers could be urged back to the fields.

But more appalling to my mind—vastly more appalling, since it seemed like the overthrow of the very order of nature—was the laxity with regard to the golden orbs that ruled the Atlantean day. Owing no doubt to the negligence of the official in charge, the clockwork that controlled these artificial suns ran down on what should have been the third night, and the luminaries continued in full blaze after the usual hour of darkness. But few seemed even to notice the change, and most continued frenziedly watching the waters or awaiting encouraging reports; while those that could, snatched a few hours of troubled sleep during the continuous daylight, and many still kept their useless vigils with drawn faces and weary eyes.

Meantime the Salty River continued to rise. Slowly and insidiously, by inches and by half inches, it crept up and up, up and up, until after two days not more than a hand's breadth separated it from the top of the embankment. And after three days it had not more than a finger's breadth to go, while on the fourth day we could see thin, sparkling streams flowing down the more low-lying street, not deep enough to make them quite impassable, but lending to the columned thoroughfares the aspect of some pathetic Venice. Simultaneously the autophone brought news that the small towns of Malgos and Dorion had been inundated and that their inhabitants had fled for higher ground; that the larger cities of Atolis, Lerenon, and Aedla were rearing embankments to keep out the waters, and that the farm lands of eastern Atlantis were flooded as far as the eye could see. But little that was even mildly hopeful was reported. It was stated that the repair ships were still trying to cope with the leak, though without success; that the intra-atomic pumps were disposing of most of the surplus water, but were being taxed to capacity; that in several places huge electric shovels were at work, digging out great hollows into which the floods might be drained; that efforts were being made to freeze huge masses of water, and force the ice against the wall, in the attempt to stem the torrents. . . . But all the while the river continued to rise, and nothing short of a miracle seemed likely to check disaster.

After five days the water was flowing to a depth of many inches through half the streets of Archeon; and only the rapid erection of earthworks had saved the other half. And it was after five nerve-racking days that—as I have stated—I received the summons from the High Chief Adviser.

The messenger—a wan-faced old man who seemed to be in a breathless hurry—was waiting for me when I returned home with Aelios after strolling aimlessly for hours through the unflooded portions of the town. From the grave attitude with which he greeted me, I knew at once that something was amiss; but he had no explicit information to offer. "The High Chief Adviser wishes to see you without delay," was all that he

would report. And having uttered these words, he began edging away as though he had immediate business elsewhere.

There being nothing else to do, I accompanied this singular messenger after hastily assuring Aelios that I would return as soon as possible.

As I might have anticipated, our walk turned out to be far from pleasant. The old man had evidently been long trained in diplomacy, for I could not induce him to speak except non-committally and in monosyllables. And all the way to the office of the Adviser I was left to my own conjectures, while we skirted public squares that looked like lakes or waded ankle-deep through the salty water.

ARRIVING at the many-domed sandstone edifice where the Atlantean government had its headquarters, my companion bade me wait in a book-lined anteroom, and went to notify his chief of my arrival. It was as though my coming had been awaited, for the old man had hardly left me when he reappeared and motioned me to follow him.

I have a vague remembrance of accompanying him through long, arched galleries; but of these my mind retains no definite impression, and the next thing I clearly recall is that I stood in a little blue-walled room before an impressive-looking elderly man whose picture I had often seen. His long, furrowed, sagacious features were manifestly those of a scholar, but there was a squareness about the jaw that marked him also as a man of action; while at the same time there was a patriarchal benignity about the sympathetic lines of the face. But one quality there was which dominated him now, and which none of the pictures had shown: an air of utter fatigue, of melancholy, almost of despair, all too plainly written in the hollows that underlined the weary, gray eyes, in the pale cheeks almost totally drained of blood, and in the haggard expression as of one who has not slept for days.

To the right of the High Chief Adviser was seated a man whom I recognized with surprise. It was Xanocles, also looking pallid and worn—and as he rose to greet me I began to conceive some faint idea why I had been summoned.

The Chief Adviser gravely motioned me to a seat at his left; and as I sank into the cushioned chair he plunged without formality into an explanation.

"I need hardly tell you," he commenced, speaking rapidly but in dull, sober tones, "how serious is the crisis that confronts Atlantis. But perhaps no one—except those of us who are on the inside of affairs—realizes quite how acute the danger is. Frankly speaking, we are incapable of dealing with the emergency. The intra-atomic pumps have been working to capacity for five days, forcing out fifty per cent more than their usual volume; but, even so, the water is pouring in at the rate of several tons a second faster than we can drive it out. This in itself would indicate a grave enough peril; but this is not the worst. Our engineers tell us that the crack is extending to portions of the wall previously unaffected, and that new sections may give way at any time. When this happens, it will be—the end."

The High Chief Adviser paused, bleakly frowning; then, with a piercing glance at me, as if to see whether I had anticipated his meaning, he continued, "It is apparent that Atlantis cannot save itself. We are facing a peril unique in history, and have not the weapons with which to combat it. If help comes, it must come from outside. And that is why I have summoned you."

"But I don't exactly see—" I began.

"Let me explain," the official continued, impatiently. "You yourself of course can do nothing. But you come from a people who, to judge from your writings, have developed remarkable engineering and mechanical skill. I am hopeful that their science may be able to devise some means of saving us, and for that reason I am planning to send you above seas for help. What do you think of the idea?"

"Why, I—I think it might be worth trying," was all I was able to gasp in reply.

"Your friend Xanocles also thinks it worth trying," proceeded the Adviser suavely. "Now I personally have always been against the policy of Emergence; but it is imperative to try new measures; and at a time like this, fortunately, the law empowers me to take any action on my own initiative. And so I sent for Xanocles today as one of the most prominent local members of the Emergence Party, and when I asked whom he would advise me to appoint as special envoy to the upper world he had no hesitation about mentioning you."

"But why me?" I demanded, doubtful of my qualifications for so high an office.

"Well, to be sure, you were not the only one," stated the Adviser. "He also recommended a certain Gavison, but we have decided to hold him in reserve, and if you do not return in a few days we will send him out with a second submarine. Meanwhile, if you would care to accept—"

"Why, of course—of course I'll accept—if it is for the good of Atlantis," I declared. "But just what would you expect of me?"

"One of our submersible vessels, with a crew of four men, will be in readiness at the docks early tomorrow morning. You will board it, and it will bear you out through the eastern valve and to any part of the upper world you may direct. But you are to waste no time about informing your fellows of the menace that confronts Atlantis. They too have submersible vessels, as your arrival here proves—let them send some of their ships down here, if they can, with materials to repair the wall. But above all things, you must remember not to delay, not to delay!"

"I will do my best," I promised. "But let me not hold out any false hopes—I am not sure that the upper world will be able to assist."

"At any rate, you can try," sighed the Head of the Atlantean government. "It is a chance worth taking. We lose nothing by the attempt."

And then, fixing on me that powerful magnetic glance common to all the Atlanteans, he demanded, "You will spare no effort?"

"I will spare no effort," I solemnly vowed.

"Then the fates be with you!" And the High Chief Adviser rose and firmly took both my hands; and I thought that just a trace of emotion dimmed his eyes as he fervently continued, "I need say no more. You know as well as I how much depends upon this. Above all things, Harkness, you will make haste, you will make haste, will you not? Good-bye—and good fortune will be yours!"

And the next moment, accompanied by Xanocles, I was passing through the outer galleries. The last glimpse I caught of the High Adviser showed me the great head wearily sagging, the lids drooping over the melancholy gray eyes as if in utmost renunciation or despair.

FROM the Adviser's office I hastened straight home, leaving Xanocles, after being assured that he would come to me early in the morning.

I found Aelios impatiently awaiting my return. "You

have been long," she murmured, although it seemed to me that I had come back very quickly. And the big, blue eyes looked up at me inquiringly, and I had to explain at once the meaning of the Adviser's summons.

She followed my recital without a word; but heavy furrows began to appear upon her brow when I told her how serious was the plight of Atlantis; and a big limpid teardrop flowed unheeded down her cheek.

"You did right to accept the commission," she said, coming to me when I had finished my story, and resting one hand affectionately upon my shoulder. And a deep melancholy made moist her eyes as she continued, "I am glad that the choice has fallen upon you. When do we start on our voyage?"

"We?" I repeated, staring at her in surprise.

"Yes, we. I intend to go with you, of course."

"But, Aelios, that's impossible!" I exclaimed, springing up and drawing her closely to me. "You know how much I'd like to have you with me. But you don't seem to realize the peril."

"Peril?" She laughed disdainfully, as she withdrew from me. "Do you think I'd have you submit to a peril I wouldn't share in? Besides, is it not in the interest of my own country? Should I stay here doing nothing when I might help to save Atlantis?"

"But, even so, would you be permitted—" I started to protest.

"Of course I'd be permitted! The High Chief Adviser would be more than willing—only, of course, he wouldn't ask me to take the risk."

"And neither would I ask you—" I objected; but she cut me short by demanding, sharply, "Do you think it's any greater than the risk of staying here?" And, with the air of one whose mind is made up and is not to be questioned, she reminded me, "We better be getting ready, for I don't suppose we'll have any time to waste."

And thereupon, the question having been settled, we began our meager preparations. But we found that there was not much to prepare, for of course the submarine would be well provisioned; and, except for a few personal trinkets, we could think of little to take away with us. But it occurred to me to bring a copy of Homer's lost masterpiece, the "Telegonus," which might convince the upper world of the truth of my reports about Atlantis. And it also occurred to me to pay a pilfering expedition to the museum, which was now untenanted even by the doormen; and, when I returned, my pockets were weighed down with several pieces of gold, and my arms were laden with a large amorphous bundle, whose contents might have been identified as an Ensign's uniform.

Of the night that followed I have only the most confused and disturbing remembrance. I know that I did not sleep, except to drowse away by brief, nightmare-haunted spells; and I also know that Aelios did not sleep, for her mind like mine was busy contemplating the adventure before us. Yet we were both too weary for connected thought; and jumbled visions were all that greeted us as we lay there speechless in the blackness.

The moment the lights were flashed on again we renounced our futile attempts at slumber. And we had hardly risen and made ourselves presentable when we began to receive visitors. Not only did Xanocles arrive as he had promised, but the entire Upper World Club appeared in a group, for I had notified Gavison of my prospective departure and had expressed my desire to see all the men again before I left.

Since all our visitors insisted on seeing us off, it was a good-sized company that attended us as we bade farewell to the butterfly-shaped building that had housed us so long, and set off through the streets of the stricken city toward the river. Yet our escort, while large, was far from merry, for the strain of the past few days was written upon us all, and the pale cheeks and weary looks of my companions matched their listless manner and their silence. One or two—and among them the unquenchable Stranahan—did indeed attempt to be jocular; but their efforts were half-hearted and flat, and their laughter rang thin and hollow like mockery; and as we drew nearer our goal and saw the flood rippling through the streets ahead, we heard no more of their jests, but all of us plunged onward speechlessly and with stern, set faces, oppressed as though by the shadow of some solemn and awful presence.

WHEN we reached the inundated districts, I of course urged my companions to turn back. But they paid no heed, and pressed gravely on their way, first wading ankle-deep, then halfway to their knees, while strung out in a long line among scattered houses that looked like lake dwellings. Here a marble edifice, there a colonnade, yonder a cluster of statues, projected above the deluge, whose green-gray current went swishing past as though from an inexhaustible source. Amid those fluid wastes, which had obliterated all familiar landmarks and gave to well known things a new and terrible majesty, it was impossible to be sure of our way; and once one of the men slipped into a depression so deep that he had to swim to save himself; and more than once some one tripped over some buried obstacle, and went floundering at full length into the water, thereby provoking a short-lived outburst of mirth. So great were the dangers that we had to move very slowly; but we also moved with grim regularity, and our progress was without sound other than the monotonous splash, splash of our advancing feet.

Yet it was not only our own plight that made us moody and sad. As we plodded through the flooded districts, we had continual glimpses of the inhabitants —and in their aspect and manner there was nothing to reassure us. Here, through an open window, we would catch sight of several agile figures straining to bind some huge collection into a bundle; there we would observe a man descending from his doorstep into the enveloping waters, his back bent down with a great pile of household articles, a wan-faced woman clinging nervously to him or turning back with moist eyes to the home they were leaving. And we passed not one or two such refugees but scores, literally scores. One would have a three-year-old perched securely on his shoulder, another would be trying to soothe a crying babe or leading by the hand a frightened lad of five; some would be bearing off great heaps of clothing or huge cans and boxes that looked like food containers, and a few were puffing and panting to save their books, rugs and paintings.

Meanwhile the eyes of all the people were baleful with a wild, unnatural light; their features were assuming a furtive, hunted expression; their voices had lost their music, and had grown nervous and shrill. And all were looking bloodless and bedraggled; ominous hollows were forming in their cheeks and beneath their eyes; their clothes were soiled and untended, their beards scraggly and untrimmed; and many had lost their normal restraint, so that we passed a woman who sobbed and sobbed quite regardless of our approach, an old man who growled and gibbered insanely to himself, and more than one that did not even seem to see us, but stared upward intently with imploring face, while mumbling incoherent melancholy phrases.

When finally we drew near our destination, the water reached to the knees of the tallest of us, and our progress was more laborious and slower than ever. I now began to fear that we would not be able to locate the river bank, for how tell where the shallow water ended and the deep began? At length, however, I was relieved to observe a wide, unbroken flowing expanse several hundred yards ahead, and to note that a long rope, stretched in the water between improvised wooden supports, marked the river's theoretical edge.

It was just when we came in sight of our goal that the supreme horror befell. Even to this day I can recapture the amazement and alarm of that dread moment; and the abruptness of it all and the terror overwhelm me anew. Had the waters swelled and swept over us in a tidal wave, I would have been panic-stricken and yet halfway prepared—but I could not have anticipated that the blow was to strike from above rather than from beneath.

SUDDENLY—although this was only the beginning of the Atlantean day—the golden lights of the glass dome began to waver and flicker, then paled to a twilight glow, then (in less time than it takes to state) snapped into blackness.

So startled were we that we stood there transfixed; scarcely an oath issued from our petrified lips. The darkness was absolute; we could not see our nearest neighbors; we seemed walled in by oblivion. For a moment there was silence; then came a light splashing to my left, and simultaneously dozens of voices burst forth bewilderingly in terror and dismay.

And when that first horrified outburst was dying down, there crept over us from a distance other cries—confused cries as of many voices sighing and wailing in chorus. And all those voices seemed to form into one, and to grieve and drone in a single long-drawn sob, with echoes reminding me uncannily of lost souls mourning in the dark.

But soon that melancholy tumult passed away; and we were aware only that we stood there knee-deep in the flood, in a silence unbroken except by the gurgling waters.

Then it was that the most quick-witted of us all came to his senses. Suddenly a vivid light stabbed the gloom just to my left; and by its glaring yellow illumination I could make out the tall form of Xanocles.

In his hands was a good-sized pocket flashlight. "I was a little afraid this might happen," he declared, trying to be matter-of-fact, and speaking loudly enough for us all to hear. "Lucky I had these lanterns with me." And, to our surprise, he calmly drew several more flashlights from the folds of his garments, and passed them to his nearest neighbors.

"The High Chief Adviser warned me yesterday that this was possible," he explained. "And so I thought it best to be prepared."

And then, while we all stood gaping at him like men with paralyzed minds, he continued, soothingly, "There is really nothing to be alarmed about. The water must have gotten into the electric power generators—that is all. In a few hours the lights will no doubt be shining again."

But his words did not carry conviction. In his voice was a note of concern that he could not wholly exclude; and as we glanced nervously into the gloom—a gloom that was all-enveloping except for our flashlights and an occasional firefly flicker in the far distance—we could not believe that the golden luminaries would soon beam upon us again.

It was a solemn procession that started splashing once more toward the river bank. Guided by the sallow illumination of the flashlights, we could barely find our course; and step by step, with laborious slowness, we plodded through the unrelenting flood. None of us could find the heart to utter a word; and from time to time, among my shadowy attendants, I caught glimpses of lips rigidly compressed and faces firmly set, as among men who go forth to meet the Ultimate. All the while Aelios was at my side, hovering close as if for shelter; and when I could I helped her over the more difficult places, though she too was speechless, like one whose thoughts are too appalling for expression.

Then, for an instant, hope came flashing back. A sudden radiance burst upon us from above; the great luminaries were once more touched with light, which fitfully expanded from a pale red glow almost to the normal golden—and then fitfully died out into utter gloom.

And our cries of rejoicing were frozen on our lips, and the darkness that ensued seemed more intense than ever. And once more there was only the silence, the wavering flashlights and the whirling floods.

Groping and floundering and sometimes sinking almost up to the hips in water, we at last found ourselves near the rope that marked the river's verge. And by turning upstream toward a dim but steady yellow light, we managed to locate the docks and the submarine, which we recognized by the radiance filtering through the portholes.

Then, almost before I realized that the ultimate moment had come, I found myself assisting Aelios up the half-submerged gangplank and on to the deck of the grim, low-lying, shadowy ship. The next that I remember is that I was back again in two feet of water, and that a multitude of hands clasped mine, a multitude of voices were lifted simultaneously, first the voices of a mob attempting a cheer that died prematurely, then the voices of individuals, shouting out advice and farewells, wishing me a safe voyage, entreating me to make haste for the good of Atlantis. I have a recollection of seeing the earnest, grave face of Gavison by the uncertain, shifting illumination of the flashlights; the elongated, intellectual face of Xanocles; the youthful but sad-eyed and frightened face of Rawson, and Stranahan's droll countenance now furrowed almost into a tragic severity.

But in an instant all these faces—so familiar to me, and so well liked—had drifted out of view. I too stood upon the gangplank, lightly waving although my heart seemed dull and dead within me. Then I mounted to the deck, cast a last glance at the darkness that hid the marble temples of Atlantis, and waved for the last time to the dim watching figures. And as the flashlights began slowly to retreat, I descended a narrow stairway, heard an iron door clatter to a close above me, felt a jolt and a shudder that were followed by a regular, incessant quivering—and knew that I was on my way back to the earth.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Return

THE facts of my return from Atlantis have been reported so widely that it would be futile for me to dwell upon them. It is generally known how, having crossed the ocean at the sixty-knot speed made possible by our intra-atomic propellers, our submarine found its way to the mouth of the Potomac and almost up to Washington; how, after it had anchored obscurely some distance below the city, I donned my old uniform and made my way out under cover of night; how I hastened the next day to the offices of

the naval department, disclosed my identity, and met with ridicule not only at my incredible tale, but at my strange appearance, my long beard, my goggles and my greenish skin.

Unfortunately, in the haste and confusion of my departure from the Sunken World, I had made one oversight. I had forgotten the copy of Homer's lost "Telegonus," which I had hoped to exhibit in verification of my story! Scattered lines of the poem, to be sure, did keep trailing through my mind with a wild, ringing majesty—but they were the merest fragments, and to recite them would have been to brand myself as a madman. Yet I had little other evidence to display. Aelios could not help me, for she could not speak English; and in spite of her exceptional beauty, there would have been nothing to prove that she had not been born above seas. And as for the four members of the submarine crew, they refused stanchly to leave the vessel; and, besides, they likewise could not speak English, and their fantastic Atlantean garb would no doubt have marked them also as lunatics.

And so there was nothing to do but wait, wait for days and days, haunting the naval offices, making myself a laughing stock and a nuisance, yet repeating my pleas so insistently that in the end they had to be heeded. But meanwhile I was losing time—time which I knew to be all-important. Even now Atlantis might be in a death-grip with the waters; and the difference of a few hours might bridge the gap between safety and disaster. Would not my fellows make haste? was the question I kept asking and asking; and all the while they remained inactive and unmoved. Every day, with tears in her eyes, Aelios would inquire when the rescuing expedition was to set out; and every day I would nod sadly, and sigh, "Perhaps tomorrow." But tomorrow would bring little hope; and even when at last an investigation was undertaken, it was careless and dilatory—and it was long before I could convince the bewildered inspectors that I was actually one of the company of the lost X-111.

It was long, indeed, before I could even find any one to identify me. In a land where my acquaintances had been legion, I was apparently unknown; and my old friends had either been dispersed or else I had slipped out of their minds. Even Alma Huntley failed to reply to my letters; and it was months before I learned that, having long given me up as lost, she had left two years before for the Pacific Coast as the bride of the Reverend David Mosely.

But though my messages to Alma never reached their destination, a letter to my old friend, Frank Everett, survived many forwardings and found its goal; and not only did Everett hasten to me from New York, but he summoned others of our former group, whose testimony combined with the evidence of finger-prints and handwriting to identify me beyond dispute.

Matters now began to move more quickly—in fact, with a rapidity that was bewildering. Almost overnight my story was flashed from end to end of the land, and I found myself a public figure. Newspaper headlines flaunted my name, and the word Atlantis was on every one's lips; interviewers came swarming to see me, scientists with their demands for information, the heads of lecture bureaus and of motion picture corporations with their golden offers. But all that really interested me were the offers of assistance for the Sunken World. Several men of means became interested, and placed large funds at our disposal, so making possible the Harkness Institute for Marine Research, half a dozen engineers volunteered to accompany me back to Atlantis, and with their aid we secured implements and chemicals capable of sealing wide breaches in a glass wall. But we could produce no vessel other than that in which we had left Atlantis, for the naval submarines were not equipped for the deep waters of the Sunken World; and so when finally the rescuing party set off down the Potomac from Washington, its members numbered only six in addition to Aelios and myself and the original crew.

THE small size of this expedition and its limited equipment would alone have made us doubtful of success; but we remembered with acute misgivings that two full months had passed since we left Archeon, and that during all this time the flood waters must have been rising. We were particularly uneasy because of the failure of Gavison to appear in a second submarine, as the High Chief Adviser had promised; and, brooding upon his absence, we would recall how we had bidden farewell to Atlantis, and would think with a shudder of the bleak confusion of the people and the swelling torrents swishing through the darkness.

To make matters worse (if they could possibly be worse) our voyage back to Atlantis was beset with unforeseen difficulties. Owing to the absence of definite charts and our uncertainty as to the latitude and longitude of the Sunken World, we were lost for several days amid the wildest wastes of the Atlantic. At times we would dive to the sea bottom, or to such depths that Atlantis could not conceivably be beneath us, and would go cruising for hours amid that black infinity or along the shell-strewn or bouldery floor of the ocean, staring through the portholes at the luminous-eyed creatures that flitted ghost-like about us, and here and there gaping horror-stricken at some contorted but strangely eloquent rusty iron mass. But of Atlantis itself there was no sign, and we had the queer impression that it had dissolved bubble-like amid the watery immensity.

And so at length our expedition converted itself into little more than a random questing after what did not appear to exist. Should we ever again catch a glimpse of the green-golden walls of our lost universe? There were moments when I was given to curious doubts, and felt that Atlantis, once lost, could never be found again; that the billows would cover it as completely from our sight as from the sight of the ages. But all the time, while we kept dashing at prodigious speed through the vacant waters, we were given to strange fits of hope that alternated with spells of despair,—hope when we would descry a far-off light that would turn out to be merely some elusive fishy lantern,—despair that our help, already too long delayed, was being retarded to the point of impotence.

The final discovery came with startling suddenness. One day, gliding slowly downward at a considerable depth, we were stopped by a hard, flat barrier that spread beneath us like the sea bottom. But as we began to drift horizontally, we observed that the surface was smooth and ominously light-reflecting—and with a gasp of despair we recognized that the substance was glass!

The surprise and horror of that moment are still vivid in my memory. "Turn the searchlights down, down!" muttered the leader of our crew, in a voice that trembled perceptibly; and as the great water-piercing streamers began to quiver and shake and then slowly descended in long, rambling curves, Aelios came rushing to my side like a child who fears to be alone, and clung closely to me while we both stared through the portholes with faces rigid and eager.

But at first we saw nothing. All was dark beneath

us—not a gleam, not a flicker, broke the blackness of the Sunken World.

Then, as the searchlights swayed and shifted till they swept the depths directly beneath, we began to make out familiar objects amid the obscurity. Dimly, strangely, as though draped in a fog, the outlines of great domes and arches and colonnades began to emerge, interspersed by Titanic columns and statuesque temples that appeared to waver uncannily.

"See! See! It is still there!" Aelios cried, frantically, as she pressed more closely to me; and with the agony of despair in her voice was mingled just a tinge of hope.

I took her hand and sought to console her; but even as I did so her whole body began to shake spasmodically, and her sobbing throbbed from end to end of the ship. For many minutes she seemed unable to speak.

Yet, even while the long-drawn, heartbreaking sobs panted forth, she began to point, to point distractedly downward, with blind, quivering fingers that called with frenzied urgency, forcing me to peer again through the porthole.

With my arms still about her, I scanned the dim, ghostly twilight. But for a moment I observed nothing alarming. Then, as my gaze became focused upon a gray dome just below, I too cried out in dread realization.

Those glass-covered depths were not without sign of life, as I had thought; but here and there a lantern-bearing object, with flapping finny body, went wavering through the windows and above the temple roofs!

THE END.

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OUT *of the* SUB-UNIVERSE

By R.F.Starzl

"IF you really are so anxious to go, I won't keep you from going any more," said Professor Halley with a sigh, to the young man who sat opposite to him in his laboratory. "Eventually it will become necessary for a human being to make the journey, and no one is better qualified than you to make an accurate report."

"Indeed, I should think not," smiled Hale McLaren, his friend and pupil, "as long as I've been your assistant, and, you might say, co-discoverer. But ——" his eyes clouded, "I don't know about Shirley. She wants to go along."

"I think you should let her go along if she wants to," said Halley slowly. "You know that I love my daughter even more than she loves you, but I realize that if you failed to come back, as our experimental rabbits failed to come back, she could never be happy again. She would rather be with you, no matter how inhospitable the little world to which you are going."

"But I will come back!" insisted Hale McLaren urgently. "We know why our experimental animals did not return. As soon as they arrived on the surface of whatever little planet they happened to land on, they did not bother to wonder where they might be. They simply wandered on, and of course it was impossible for our apparatus to find them again. You may be sure that I won't leave the landing spot."

"Nevertheless, it is possible you may fail to return. Shirley is almost a grown woman. We will explain the dangers to her, and if she still wants to go, she shall go."

He stepped to the telephone and called the number of his home, only a short distance from the little inland college where he was head of the physics department. In a few minutes Shirley came into the presence of the two men and regarded their soberness amusedly.

"Whose funeral are you holding today?" she asked.

"Don't talk of funerals at a time like this," said McLaren, a little crossly. "We called you over here to explain to you again the danger of the trip you want to make with me. Frankly, I don't want you along, but your father says you can come if you want to."

"Of course I'm going!" she retorted with mock defiance. "Do you think I want to lose you to some atomic vamp?"

"This is serious," he persisted, refusing for once to yield to her rallying. He led the way to the corner of the big, bare room, where he moved aside a denim curtain sliding on a wire, which hid a maze of enigmatic apparatus, evidently electrical in its nature. In the center of a large helix, on a base of peculiar translucent green material, stood a great glass bell, large enough for two or three persons to stand inside. A bank of high-voltage vacuum tubes against one wall was connected by means of heavy copper tubing to various points on the helix. The translucent green base was supported on a number of cylinders, which formed a hydraulic hoist so that the heavy green disc could be lowered in order to permit the introduction of objects under the independently supported bell.

"I'm going to start in a few minutes," McLaren informed Shirley, and despite his assumed brusqueness, his voice betrayed a tremor of tenderness. "Your father is going to explain the danger to you, and if you still want to go, we start together."

"You know, Shirley," began Professor Halley in his best class-room manner, "that Hale and I have been engaging extensively in research work to discover the ultimate composition of matter. I will admit that we are as much in the dark regarding our primary quest as ever, but in our researches we have opened new vistas that are fully as beautiful and as interesting as the truths we first sought.

"By utilizing the newly discovered cosmic ray, which has a wavelength infinitely shorter than any other known kind of light, we have been able to get circumstantial evidence that electrons do not consist solely of a negative electric charge, as physicists have thought before, but that this charge is actually held by a real particle of matter, so infinitely small that we would never get direct evidence of its existence by the older methods.

"While pursuing these studies, we stumbled upon another property of the cosmic ray. We found that certain harmonics of the ray, when enormously amplified, have the property of reducing or increasing the mass and volume of all matter, without changing its form. We have discovered no limit to this power. We believe it is infinite.

"Now this suggests a possible solution of the problem of the constitution of the universe. Could we prove that the atom with its central nucleus and its satellites, called electrons, is really only a miniature universe, in fact and not by analogy only, we could

EVERYTHING in this world is relative, with or without Einstein. Even time is relative. As Benjamin Franklin pointed out, the Ephemerid fly lives only twenty-four hours; yet leads a normal existence. During those twenty-four hours, it lives a full-time life, which, to the fly is of the same duration as a 60 to 70 year old life led by the human being. So too, is it with a microbe or microbe organism, which lives only a few minutes and then dies. These few minutes constitute a normal cycle. It simply lives much more quickly, although it does not realize it.

You can conversely imagine a race of super-beings on some other planet, which normally would live perhaps 10,000 years, as computed according to our time. To them our few years of allotted life would be incomprehensible.

Here is a charming story which contains excellent science and will make you understand a great deal about the atomic world, if you do not know it already. Also, it contains that most elusive jewel,—the surprise ending.

As he watched them in stupefaction, looking vainly for McLaren and Shirley, a man separated himself from the crowd, walked to the edge of the table, made a deep obeisance, and called "Where are we?"

safely assume that the constituents of the infra-universe beneath us and the super-universe above us are only links of a chain that stretches into infinity!"

Professor Halley paused. His assistant was flushed and enthusiastic, and his daughter's cheeks glowed brightly and her eyes sparkled. But she was not looking at the apparatus; she was looking at the smooth, dark hair of her fiancé.

"We have sent things into that sub-universe," he continued, "chairs, coins, glasses, bricks and things like that. And we have brought some of them back. But when we sent guinea pigs or rabbits, or a stray dog into that world of mystery, we could not bring them back. Hale thinks the animals may have wandered away, out of focus of our rays. I don't know. He may be right, or they may have met some terrible unknown fate. Now he offers himself for the experiment. It is dangerous. It may be ghastly. But if you wish to go with him, you may. Your mother is dead. You may leave me lonely in my old age; but you may go—for science!"

A solemn hush followed the simple words. Then Shirley said clearly: "I will go."

THE physicist turned his head for a moment. When he faced them again, there was no sign of his mental struggle. Firmly, he threw a lever, and the green base silently lowered to the floor. McLaren and the girl stepped upon it, and when it rose again it carried them into the glass bell. The professor turned to the raised platform where the control board was located.

"Good-bye!" he called. "I'll bring you back in half an hour."

"Good-bye!" they returned, their voices muffled.

A powerful generator sprang into action, filling the laboratory with its high-pitched whine. The vacuum tubes glowed dully, and a powerful odor of ozone permeated the air. With a loud crash, the high-tension electricity discharged between adjacent turns of the helix. The professor hastened to adjust a condenser, and again the silence was broken only by the whine of the generator and a low humming.

As the professor continued to adjust the controls, the bell gradually filled with a deep violet light that swayed and swirled tenuously like the drapes of an aurora borealis. The light swirled around the man and the girl, at times almost hiding them from view. It gradually concentrated toward the bottom of the bell, seeming to cling to the green base, intertwining the two living forms until it almost hid them from view. Yet they continued to smile and wave encouragement.

"And now it was evident that they were growing smaller. Already they were less than four-feet tall, and as the apparatus was brought more and more into perfect resonance, their rate of shrinkage accelerated. Soon they were but a foot high, standing in a sea of violet light, then six inches, then hardly an inch. The professor turned off the generator.

The girl and the man now walked the few inches necessary to bring them to the exact center of the base. Here, in a slight depression in the smooth material, was a tiny granule of carbon, one of the atoms of which they were to explore. It was so tiny that it could hardly be seen under the microscope, ordinarily, yet to McLaren, it must already have become plainly visible, for he soon spoke to the girl and she joined him, standing with him very closely near a spot on the floor which he indicated.

Again the mysterious harmonics of the cosmic ray were brought into action, and the two tiny figures vanished from sight. The professor stayed at the controls, his eyes fixed anxiously on his watch until the proper time had elapsed, as indicated by his calculations. He stopped the dynamo again and laid his watch on the table. He marked the time when he should recall them, 10 minutes after four, and paced nervously up and down the room in which he was now alone. Moisture beading his brow, he stopped and stared at the slight depression in which lay a million universes, each one as complete and as perfect as his own, and in one of those universes was a whirling speck on which he had deposited his daughter and best-loved assistant.

He started as the telephone whirred and disposed of a student who wanted to make a trifling inquiry. Then he went back to his watch again, listened to see if his watch might have stopped. It was very still in the laboratory, and when a small rill of water suddenly cascaded out of the cooling jacket of one of the heavy-duty vacuum tubes, the noise seemed loud and strident.

A new thought was now harassing Professor Halley. Suppose that in that unthinkably small world, there were dangerous creatures, whom Hale and Shirley might be battling for their lives even at that moment. Perhaps this world might happen to be a blazing sun; suppose they had gasped their lives out on a sterile and airless moon? He looked at his watch again. The half-hour was almost up. A few more minutes, and they'd be ready and waiting to come back —wouldn't do to turn on the ray while they might be a short distance away, out of focus. — — A few more seconds — — now!

WITH a fierce sweep, he threw the switch and the violet light filled the glass bell again. Quickly he reversed the current—then crept to the base of the glass dome so that he might see the returned wanderers as soon as they grew into visibility.

Within a few minutes a small cloudy patch appeared in the glassy depression where the microscopic granule of carbon lay. Before the physicist's eyes this spot resolved itself into hundreds of tiny dots—dots that grew rapidly until they resembled minute upright pegs —pegs that presently grew large enough to show arms and legs. Small human-like creatures that were plainly men and women by the time they were half an inch tall. Men and women that grew and walked about, and were evidently greatly perturbed.

Halley watched them with amazement until they were a few inches tall. He did not move until they began to be so crowded that there was danger of smothering some of them. Then he leaped to the switch to stop their growth, and lowered the green disc until it was at the same level as the table, to which some of the more venturesome now jumped for the sake of more room. As he watched them in stupefaction, looking vainly for McLaren and Shirley, a man separated himself from the crowd, walked to the edge of the table, made a deep obeisance, and called:

"Where are we?"

His voice was thin and reedy, like the chirp of an insect, and his accent was slurred and difficult to understand. Yet he spoke recognizable English.

"You are on earth," said Halley automatically.

This remark created the most profound impression. A thin, sighing cry arose from the little people, and many of them prostrated themselves. They wore filmy, short robes that came to their kness, held to their bodies by girdles. Men and women were dressed pretty nearly alike, but there was a well defined plan of ornamentation which distinguished the sexes.

The leader turned on them and cried:

"Hark! Hark! Is it not as we, your priests, have told you! To the faithful shall it be granted to be carried from our vale of tears to the Earth, with its portals of gold, where the milk and honey flows. You have heard the voice of the Angel. In a voice of thunder he has told you, you are at the gateway of the Earth, while those who believe not shall be cast into the outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth!"

Someone in the background began a hymn. The mass of pygmy humanity joined, and the faint insect-like chorus filled the room.

Halley addressed the priest again.

"Where do you come from?"

"We are citizens of Elektron, so named by our illustrious ancestors, Haël, the Man, and Shuërrely, the Woman, who came to our planet in its youth, aeons and aeons ago—so many millions of years ago that they are to be reckoned only in geological epochs."

"How did you know the name of our earth?"

"It was handed down to us from generation to generation. It is preserved in our monuments and temples, and in the records of our wise men. We knew for many ages that it is the elysium of perfection—the place of infinite happiness. For did not our illustrious forebears, Haël and Shuërrely, pine for the Earth, though they came to our Elektron when it was a young planet with a soft climate, and rich in luscious fruits?"

"You say Hale and Shirley came to your planet many ages ago? Wasn't your planet peopled then?"

"There were animals, some of terrifying size and frightful armament. But our Earth-sent ancestors, through superior cunning, overcame them, and their children gradually conquered all of Elektron. We are their descendants, but we have preserved their language, and their traditions, and their religion, and we treasured the Great Promise."

"The Great Promise?"

"The Great Promise," the Elektronite intoned, almost sonorously, despite his small size, "was given us by Haël and Shuërrely. They declared that a great wizard, an Angel of superlative power and understanding, would some day penetrate the vast empty spaces of our starry universe and take us to the Earth. On the spot where they first appeared, they commanded that their children reside and await the coming of the Angel, which they called Cosmicray. Many were there who fell from that true religion, but we have builded ourselves a temple on that sacred spot, and The Great Promise has been kept!"

Halley said to them dully, pain in his heart, "I am Shirley's father and Hale's friend, and it is not an hour since I sent them to your Elektron!"

But his grandchildren a thousand generations removed, again prostrated themselves and burst into song anew.

PROFESSOR HALLEY was in a decidedly awkward position. He narrowly escaped being indicted for murder. The disappearance of his daughter and his assistant naturally provoked inquiry, and the ugly suspicion was current that he had done away with them and consumed the bodies in his formidable looking Cosmic Ray machine.

Curiously enough, the proof which finally cleared him of the murder suspicion got him into trouble with the immigration authorities, who did not know what to do with several hundred lilliputian people who couldn't be deported to anywhere. Professor Halley positively refused to send them back to Elektron unless they agreed to go of their own free will, and none of them wanted to go back. Finally the immigration authorities consented to admit the Elektronites under bond, after they had been increased to normal size. Friends were found who assisted them in adjusting themselves to a new type of civilization, and according to latest reports, most of them are getting along very well.

The writer, after many attempts, finally obtained from Professor Halley a first-hand account of his experience and a detailed explanation of the operation of his invention. Skipping the technical details, which have nothing to do with this story, it is only necessary to give here the professor's own explanation of the remarkably fast life-cycle as lived on Elektron.

"I blame myself," said Professor Halley sadly, "for overlooking this important point. While it is true that the sub-universe resembles our own; while it is true that the electrons follow their orbits in a manner analogous to the planets around the suns; yet I overlooked the fact that due to the great difference in size there is also an enormous difference in time. It takes the earth a year to go around the sun; an electron circles its positive nucleus millions of times a second. Yet every time it completes its orbit it is like a year to the inhabitants.

"Before I had time to even blink an eye, Shirley and Hale had lived, loved, died, and many generations of their children had gone through their life cycles. It was normal to them—to us it was unthinkably brief."

He turned his patient face wearily toward the window, staring over the broad campus with unseeing eyes. They say his scientific apparatus is dusty from disuse, but the college board has decided to keep him on the faculty as long as he lives. He is a gentle, pathetic old man who will not live long.

THE END.

The MENACE

By David H. Keller, M.D.

Author of "A Biological Experiment," "The Yeast Men," etc.

TAINE of San Francisco had been called to New York. That, in itself, was an unusual, unheard of and unprecedented happening. For the first time in the history of the two cities, the Atlantic Metropolis had called upon the Secret Service of the Golden Gate for help. While Taine, one of the shrewdest detectives west of the Rockies, was rushing across the continent under sealed orders he considered this fact and looked forward with eager anticipation to the time when he would become acquainted with the problem, which was apparently too difficult for the Eastern operators to handle.

Arriving in the great city he at once went to the Pennsylvania Hotel, where a room had been reserved for him, and, in the privacy of that room, he opened and read his sealed orders. He did so with a growing sense of disappointment. He had expected something exciting and instead was simply directed to wait in his room till visited by an old man with puppies for sale. Of these he was to offer to buy the black one.

That was all.

To Taine it looked like an unnecessary piece of nonsense.

However, he had hardly time to unpack his baggage when the telephone rang and a voice at the other end asked whether the gentleman would like to buy a fine puppy. Taine said, "Perhaps," and told the man to come to his room. In a short time a knock at the door and a chorus of little yelps was heard. When the door was opened, in came a little, old Jewish peddler, carrying a basket, which seemed filled with dogs, little dogs of all colors. Without speaking, Taine closed and locked the door, and then started to look over the little dogs. Finally he found one that was solid black.

"I'll take this one he said. "How much?"

The Jew smiled and handed him a scrap of paper. Then he put the cover on the basket and, unlocking the door, left the room.

The man from San Francisco locked the door, hung his handkerchief over the keyhole, pulled down the shades and read the scrap of paper. It simply directed him to open an account at the First National Bank. That was all.

When Taine followed this order he was told that he would have to see the Cashier, but, when he followed the bank watchman, he found himself in the President's office, and the President of the bank was not alone.

"I suppose," said that official, "that you are Mr. Taine, the detective sent us by the city of San Francisco?"

The Westerner started to produce his identification paper.

"That is not necessary," said the Bank President, cordially. "Your selection of the black puppy was enough to make us sure you were the man we have been looking for. Now, let us get started and first let me introduce these gentlemen. This is Mr. Tally of the United States Secret Service, who has come especially from Washington for this meeting. The next gentleman is Gray, the Chief of our city Secret Service. You probably know Smith, who is an expert on finger-prints. Next to him is Dr. Jenkins who is the medico-legal adviser to our courts, and lastly, but of equal importance is B. Bailey Biddle, President of the New York Bankers' Association. You may have thought that our precautions were unnecessary but we have had four private detectives on this matter, and every one of the four has disappeared. We feel that they have either met with foul play or have been bribed.

That is one reason why we wanted a total stranger, one who was absolutely unknown in the city. Now, in order that you may understand the situation, I will ask each of these gentlemen to tell you briefly what he knows about it.

Suppose we start with Smith."

"About a year ago, in a Park Avenue apartment house," said that gentleman, "a man was shot. An effort was made to hush it up by bribing the policeman who heard the shot. He was a new man and thought it was his duty to rush the man to the hospital and report the shooting at Headquarters. To make a long story short, the man died, but my department had time to make his finger prints and take his measurements. As soon as he died he was buried by his friends, and all we had was the record we had made. We found that the prints and the measurements were identical with those of a negro criminal, well known some years ago to our Secret Service. Unfortunately for our peace of mind, the dead man was a white man. That has happened twice since then, and we had to explain it or confess that our method of identifying criminals was worthless. After the second incident in which we also lost the body, we were all on edge and when it occurred again, we held the body. It took some rather clever work but we were able to have Dr. Jenkins make a thorough examination of the

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corpse. He will tell you, himself, just what he found."

"I can be very brief," said Dr. Jenkins. "Talking is not my strong point. My pathologists examined that body in every way known to medical science and it was the body of a white man. The hair, however, was that of the negro race. No use going into details about it, though. We felt, when we finished, that while it looked like the body of a white man, it was somehow the body of a negro, who had in some mysterious way turned white: Of course such an idea was rather fantastic, but not impossible, so we made a full report to Chief Gray. He has been working on the problem and can tell you about it."

"I wish I could," said Gray. "If I could solve this problem I would be very happy. We put two of our best men on it and they simply dropped out of sight. Then I had a Philadelphia operator sent over and he never made a preliminary report. The Washington man put in a call for help but by the time we arrived he was gone and that was the end of him. It was evident that we were up against a system that was as clever as we were. So I called in the United States Secret Service, and Mr. Tally has been working with me for some months. Suppose we let him tell about the international developments."

"One of the most interesting parts to that," said Tally, continuing the story, "has been the large amount of gold transferred to New York from all the Continental countries, especially from France. No definite information can be secured concerning this gold, save that it is in bulk and the property of a small group of foreigners, who are steadily buying New York real estate with their wealth. We know fairly well who these people are—that is, we know who they are now—but it has been about useless to try and find out who they were and where they secured their wealth. We believe that as a group they are the richest financiers in the world. Some of their purchases in this city have been so unusual that no one, except the parties directly concerned, know about them. We have a lot of actual facts, a few surmises and one definite conclusion. We are sure that a group of white men, from continental Europe, have moved to New York and with their great wealth have purchased large blocks of real estate. This is all adjacent to Harlem. And, as fast as it is purchased, it is being occupied by colored people. Just what this means can only be surmised. Mr. Biddle will tell you how it affects the financial interests of America's greatest city. The Government is interested in the problem, but the New York Bankers' Association, being directly concerned, is financing this investigation."

"YOU are a stranger to our city and its problems," began Mr. Biddle, in a low, impressive voice, "and so it may be well to tell you something about Harlem. It is a city within a city, and is populated entirely by the colored race. There they have their own theaters, hotels, department stores, homes and apartment houses. During the day most of them work for the white race in New York; at night they return to their own city. We have depended on them for our servants and laborers and have, to a great extent, encouraged their forming such a social and economic center. For many years it has slowly increased in size but this growth has been in strict proportion to the growth of the entire city and so has been considered normal and healthy. But the situation during the past three years has been different and has given us all reason for the greatest anxiety. In the first place there has come to New York this group of foreigners, who are so wealthy that our Association can only guess as to what their total assets really amount to. They are all well educated, and appear to be of the greatest

. . . Fire burst out like a volcano from the middle of the hundred-story building. The upper fifty stories writhed in a useless effort to leap into the air, trembled, and then fell, crumpling, twisting, turning like a tortured, dying animal . . .

refinement. All of our society has been attracted to them, and there have been several marriages between their young people and ours, though this has been frowned upon by our best families. These aristocrats of the financial world are buying stocks, bonds, and the control of many of our great industries. We believe they hold the larger part of several of our railroads. They have fastened tightly to the food supplies. Someone has bought all the visible wheat and we believe that they are to be found at the bottom of the firm who have quietly bought several of our largest hotels. The most peculiar thing is their real estate purchases. The property around Harlem is being sold, and as fast as it is being sold and the leases expire the tenements, both houses and apartments, are being rented to colored people. From all over the United States, Central America and Europe, in fact wherever there are members of that race, they are steadily moving to New York, and in some way they are helped to make a living. Each day it becomes harder for a white man to secure work here, and every month a larger percent of the work in the city is being done by colored labor. That does not mean just pick and shovel work. They are going into the so-called white collar positions, and the white men are forced to either associate with them or to leave the city. Of course the rich are unaffected, but when we find the controlling shares of a bank stock in the hands of these wealthy foreigners, and one of their number elected to the Presidency of the Bank, it becomes a matter of great concern to us. During the past year the white population of Greater New York, and here I speak of all Caucasian groups in our city, has remained absolutely stationary. On the other hand, the colored population has gained five hundred per cent."

He paused long enough to wipe the beads of sweat off his face.

"Can you see what it means? If this keeps up for another ten years, New York will be a colored city. Those of us who are left here will either have to recognize the members of the race as social equals, or move out. Can you imagine the last white man in the city going through the vehicular tube in his automobile and never returning? We feel that there is something deadly and mysterious about the whole matter, and we are asking you to solve it for us. Mr. Gray, you tell him just what your plan is."

The Chief of the New York Secret Service pulled out a small memorandum book, and changed his seat so that he directly faced Taine.

"Our investigation shows that your ancestors were Italian and Spanish. Your father was born in California but married a lady from Portugal. You speak French fluently and are well acquainted with Asiatic countries, like China and Hindoostan. During the twenty years you have been in the San Francisco Secret Service, you have never failed to solve the problem assigned to you. You have a wife and several children. We will give you a million dollars which will become the property of your family, if you fail to return like the other four men did. We want you to go right back to California—do not even return to your hotel for your clothes. Take the first steamer for Tokio and then go down to Indo-China. There we will have you provided with papers showing you are a French citizen. You will then go to Paris and stay there some months as a wealthy French Colonial. Then you will come to New York with a reputation of being one of the richest men in France—but you are to come as a colored man. We will have you provided with letters of introduction. There will be no trouble in making the necessary contacts. Your deposits of several millions in the various Harlem Banks, will at once make you socially prominent. Stay there till you find out what is happening in this city."

"A sweet job," mused Taine. "How much can I draw on you for?"

"Any amount," answered President Biddle. "I mean just that—any amount that you need. Twenty-five, fifty or a hundred million to be spent by you in any way you see fit without any consultation or any accounting. We feel that you are the man for the job and that the big thing after brains is money. Your finances will be provided through our Paris representatives. We want no reports until you have the last and final one."

"You will be alone in this work," resumed Chief Gray, "but we will keep in contact with you. Constantly we want you to wear, in New York, a white carnation. If you want to communicate with us change to a pink one, and we will look after the details. We will let you out a side door and take you directly to the Pennsylvania Station. You will buy a ticket and drawing room for San Francisco, get off the train at Newark, get into an automobile driven by a red headed Irishman with one arm and he will drive you to Montreal. There you can take the Canadian Pacific to the west. I have an idea that you may have been followed here, and so you will take the usual precaution."

Taine shook hands with all the men.

"You are all as solemn as though you were attending a funeral," he said.

"I hope it will not be your funeral," replied Dr. Jenkins.

SIX months later, Mr. Morosco Acquoine sat thoughtfully in his office. Well dressed, of olive complexion, with classical features, he looked more like a college professor than a Bank President. As the head of the Harlem Commercial Bank, he occupied a specially favored position in the social and financial life of that portion of New York. His wife was one of the social leaders, in fact there were many who considered her The Social Leader. Their daughter, Florabella, just graduated from a French convent, was perfectly endowed by nature in every way to perpetuate the social standing of the New York Acquoines. All that was needed was just a little more wealth, and then?

Mr. Morosco Acquoine was thinking about a letter he had just received from Paris, telling him of the departure for New York of a very interesting person, by name Jules Gerome. He was from Indo-China where he had amassed great wealth. No one could tell just how much he was worth. He had been warmly received by the colored colony in Paris and had entertained elegantly and lavishly. Much to the disappointment of the Parisians he had decided to make New York his permanent home, and would arrive shortly. It was hoped that he would make the Harlem Commercial Bank his chief depository. If he did, Mr. Acquoine's financial worries were at an end. Finally, it was of interest to know that he had very regular features, was very light in color and was unmarried. As far as could be ascertained, his morals were exemplary.

No wonder that the Bank President pondered over the letter. It was not at all surprising that he wondered vaguely whether such a man would by any chance become interested in his daughter, Florabella Acquoine.

A week later Mr. Jules Gerome sent in his card and asked for a few minutes of Mr. Acquoine's time. Within a very few minutes Mr. Gerome was seated in a comfortable chair, refusing a very expensive cigar.

"I do not smoke," said that young man sedately. "I found years ago that it injured the pearly lustre of my teeth. I have been through many hardships in my life, but I have always taken the best care possible

of my teeth; but it is not of that I wish to confer with you. Here are some letters of introduction which I trust will be sufficient to allow me to become a depositor in your bank."

"They are not necessary, Mr. Gerome," answered the Banker, cordially.

"Perhaps not necessary, but usually a good thing. I was advised to select you, not only as my depository, but also as my fiscal agent."

"I will be pleased to serve you in any way. Do you wish to open an account today?"

"Yes, I came here direct from the steamer. Can you secure a small furnished apartment for me, with a competent valet and a cook? I want to be in my own home by night time."

"That is a rather short time," said Mr. Acquoine, "but perhaps it can be arranged."

"I think so. My first deposit with you will be twenty million dollars. Here are letters of exchange for that amount in gold."

"I am sure that you will be in your own home before bedtime," said the Banker. "In fact, I am very sure of it. We will go up to my home for dinner. I want you to meet my family and rest from your trip, while my agents are preparing for your needs."

"I do not want to put your wife to any trouble—"

"I assure you it will be a pleasure."

At dinner that day the Banker tried to explain to his wife how very important Mr. Gerome would be in the business life of New York. The little stranger, however, assured the two women that such was not at all the case.

"I have been fortunate enough," he remarked, very quietly, "to amass in a very busy life considerable wealth. I feel that this is not mine, but is really a trust, and I am going to try and spend at least a part of it, in this city, to help uplift my less fortunate brothers and sisters. I have several ideas in my mind, like founding a day nursery and opening night schools. I want my race to rise, but while they are being elevated, they must also be helped. I would like to be remembered in New York as a philanthropist rather than a philanderer, a man of charity rather than a man of wealth. In order to learn how to help them I must first learn to know them and I am sure that Mrs. Acquoine will spend some time with me, teaching me what I ought to know about the problems of the colored race in America."

"I will be proud to help you, and so will Florabella," assented the proud matron, and while the daughter was silent, her eyes were mute but eloquent witnesses of her desire to be of assistance.

From that day on, Mr. Jules Gerome led the life appropriate to the richest bachelor in Harlem. He became interested in the hospitals, day nurseries, night schools and savings banks of the negro colony. He not only visited them but he carefully studied them and made handsome contributions, not only in cash, but in suggestions leadng to their greater usefulness as well. He made no effort to become a social leader, but more and more his private suppers, for never over five guests, were becoming the talk and despair of Harlem aristocracy. There was such a great gulf between those who had been guests on these occasions and those who had not.

More and more frequently he appeared in public as the escort of Miss Florabella Acquoine. Small, with regular features and only the faintest color, she presented a type of beauty that only an expert would have refused to recognize as purest Caucasian. When the young couple first appeared together at the theater, all of Harlem was thrilled and pronounced themselves perfectly satisfied with the match, and after that hardly a day passed but Mr. Gerome needed the assistance of Miss Acquoine with his welfare work.

The Banker realized that matters were looking serious and wore a contented, perpetual smile. He and his wife had always had other plans for their daughter but, when it came to marrying millions, they felt that their own desires could be set aside. In fact, they believed that there was no need of making any change in their arrangements, simply include the wealthy Frenchman in them. He had several lengthy interviews with the Powerful Ones in a Wall Street office and then felt ready to go over the entire matter with the man he hoped to make his son-in-law.

MR. JULES GEROME had been in New York three months, when he called, by appointment, on Mr. Morosco Acquoine. Both men were immaculately dressed. Without hesitation, the Banker opened the conversation.

"My wife tells me that you are paying more and more attention to my daughter."

"I will have to admit it," replied the smiling young man.

"Are your intentions serious?"

"I have every reason to believe that the future will show that they are."

"Suppose I should ask you to stop? What if I told you that my idea was to have her marry a white man?"

"That would be foolish. No respectable white man would marry her knowing what she was. She is a lovely child, but she has the drop of blood in her—you have the drop—so has your wife. Sooner or later her husband would find it out and divorce her."

"We can separate her from us. We can send her over the line—she can marry white and no one will ever know."

Gerome shook his head.

"Do not think of doing that. It would mean a life of isolation from all her loved ones. She may pretend to be white, but some day they will find her out. I have longed to go over the line but so far I have stood by my people. You know I could pass any day and anywhere as pure white. Now if we only were white, that would be a different matter."

"Suppose——" and the Banker hesitated to continue in a whisper, "Suppose I knew a way by which the three of us and you can actually become white. Would you join us?"

"That sounds impossible to me, but it is what I have wanted all my life. Yes, I would go with you."

"Would you marry my daughter?"

"Why—I have not even talked of love to her. She would have to be consulted—it is hard to tell about the future. But this thing you propose is a dream, a fantasy."

"No! It is real."

"I do not believe it."

"Will you promise secrecy?"

"I would promise anything to be white."

"Then listen to me. Five years ago a group of our race discovered a source of gold. You observe that I say source—and I use that word because I do not know any other to use—but whether they found the gold or whether they make it, the fact is that they are not one of the rich groups of the world, but the richest. They made up their minds to own New York, but their color was an insuperable barrier to such ambition. Then they added to their combination a brilliant physician. He discovered something, I don't know what, not being a scientist, but it was something that turns a black man, or a brown man, white. So this group changed the color of a selected number of brilliantly educated, capable colored men and women, supplied them with

unlimited funds and started them in a quiet fight to make New York a colored city. When the time comes, every negro in the world, irrespective of his brains, will be turned white. I have talked with the Powerful Ones and have received permission for the four of us to be changed. I will sell all my interests here, and then we will take the treatment and make a trip around the world. When we return, it will be with new names, new interests and new ambitions. We will be white, not just pretended white, but actually white. We will join those who for the last five years have been leaders in this movement, that will make the city of New York our city and that will finally transform an entire race."

"I am astonished!" cried Mr. Jules Gerome, nervously fingering the white carnation in his lapel. "I am astonished, but not really surprised. I heard rumors of this in Indo-China. Do you suppose that I can be of any help—in any way?"

"I believe so. In fact I know that you have been under observation. No doubt you will be finally admitted to the inner circle of the Powerful Ones—after you have shown that you are worthy of trust."

Gerome appeared to be lost in deep thought. Finally he said: "They seem to have a lot of money, but just in order to show them that we are deeply interested, you tell them we will give them twenty million, five million for each of us, the day we receive the treatment. That sum ought to help a little with the work; at least it will be a proof to them of our deep sincerity."

"But can you spare that sum?"

"I can part with ten times that if I wanted to," was the nonchalant answer.

"And you will go to Paris with us—with my wife and daughter?"

"If that is what they want me to do, I see no use of protesting?"

"I shall tell them of your decision and your offer."

"Do so at once. Now that I have arrived at the decision I can hardly wait. I see now how I can make my wealth and position in life worth something. I will return to Indo-China and make that a white spot on the face of Asia."

"And you will take Florabella with you?"

"If we are married I do not see how I can keep her away from me."

The two men parted that night, each thoroughly satisfied with the way destiny was shaping his life.

HIGH above the rest of New York towered the Center Internationale. At the ground it rested on four city squares. For fifty stories it reared its colossal bulk without contraction, then it gradually became smaller for thirty more stories. From there it rose, a gorgeous spire of flashing windows and coppered frame work for twenty additional levels, ending in a golden serpent.

The lower half was tenanted by lawyers, physicians and business firms of all description. The upper half was generally supposed to be occupied by an ultra-fashionable club, concerning which there was much rumored and little known.

The battery of elevators ran from the first to the fiftieth floor. That floor was unoccupied by tenants, being merely a large lobby. Those having the right to enter the upper half evidently knew how to do so but the *modus operandi* was not apparent.

Mr. Jules Gerome, being told over the telephone that the time had come for the long anticipated meeting with the leaders of this new movement, those mysterious unknowns called by Mr. Morosco Acquoine, THE POWERFUL ONES, passed the night in writing and meditation. His correspondence consisted of a lengthy report covering his entire knowledge up to that time—and a short letter of affection to his wife and daughters. His meditation was mainly concerning his real belief in the doctrine of predestination. As a proper beginning to the new day he strolled out after breakfast and purchased two dozen red carnations. Twenty-three of these he neatly decapitated, placing the heads in his various pockets, while he put the twenty-fourth in his button-hole. Passing down the Avenue he was almost run into by a subservient, whining Servian, who asked him if he did not want to buy a puppy. The whining of the little dogs stung his memory like a lash and he asked if the man had a jet black one. The man had one but the breed was not suitable for an aristocratic French Colonial, so after some argument, Gerome continued his walk, while the Servian hailed a Yellow Cab and disappeared: but in his basket, under the puppies, were a red carnation and two letters.

That noon Mr. Jules Gerome lunched tête-a-tête with Miss Florabella Acquoine. The table was decorated with pink carnations, from which the dapper millionaire renewed his wilted bouttonierre. He also, in an absent minded manner, pulled the stems of others of the flowers, placing the flowers in his pocket. Florabella was deliciously vivacious, while her escort was quietly adoring in his aristrocratic mood. Anyone could tell, just by watching them, that they were very happy in their anticipatory dreams.

Going out to his automobile Gerome dropped the head of a red carnation. As the car passed through Harlem he tossed, now and then, a flower through the open window.

"Please stop that," pleaded Florabella. "You make me nervous. If they were only smaller they would seem like drops of blood you scatter in your path."

Mr. Jules Gerome patted her hand and told her not to worry.

He left her at her Father's home, promising to call for the three of them promptly at five-thirty that evening.

At that time the four of them entered the Acquoine car, the women dressed in the height of fashion, the evening clothes of the men somber black, only accentuating the gorgeous elegance of the jewels and furs worn by their ladies. Their clothing indicated a night of pleasure, their manner an evening of apprehensive gloom. They left their car at the Center Internationale, and walked to one of the express elevators which went to the fiftieth floor without a stop. As he entered the elevator, Gerome dropped several carnations on the floor.

Leaving the elevator, the party entered the floor which marked the separation between the two parts of the building. Here long rows of marble columns separated the large floor into several plazas, the outer of which, open to the air, were being used as roof gardens, open-air restaurants and dancing pavilions. The floor was thronged with hundreds of men and women, whose dress and general manner marked them as leaders in the aristocracy of the world.

Passing into one of the restaurants, Mr. Morosco Acquoine beckoned to the head-waiter, gave him his name and stated that he had ordered supper served in a private room. The head-waiter remembered the order perfectly and led them to a small dining-room, just large enough for four. Here supper was served, and the doors closed.

None of the party seemed to have much appetite.

The conversation did not approach the brilliancy of the glass-ware.

As they ate, Gerome noticed, or thought he noticed, a slight shifting of the entire room. He closed his eyes and concentrated on the sensations which came to him from different parts of his body. Finally he decided that his first suspicion was correct.

The private dining room was simply a camouflaged elevator.

While they were eating their supper, they were being slowly carried upward. Gerome shrugged his shoulders and kept quiet. He did not want to have two hysterical females to care for.

Now and then the door opened and another course was served.

Finally, after the ice and coffee, the door was again opened and the same obsequious head-waiter who had ushered them into the room, appeared to usher them out.

They walked out of the room into a different world. The two women were asked to wait in a tiny parlor; the men were asked to follow the waiter.

In a few seconds they found themselves in what seemed to be a business office. Around a small mahogany table sat five white men. There were three empty chairs.

Mr. Morosco Acquoine and Mr. Jules Gerome were given seats. The remaining chair remained unoccupied.

Cigars were passed. Acquoine took one and started to smoke in an agitated manner. Gerome refused with a blasé, but polite gesture.

"I do not smoke," he said quietly to the stranger at his side, "I found out years ago, that it injures the pearly lustre of my teeth. I have been through many hardships in my life, but I have always tried to take the best care possible of my teeth. Once gone they can never be replaced."

The man he addressed looked at him as though he did not hear a word he said. Then a gong sounded in a neighboring room. Again and again it boomed with a gentle but positive rhythm. Gerome started to dig long forgotten sounds out of his sub-conscious memories. Suddenly he recalled an evening, floating down the Congo, in a native dug out—He sat just a little straighter in his chair, saying to himself, between motionless lips: "By all that's Holy! That is the tom-tom."

HE looked at the men seated around the table. Without exception they seemed to be autocrats of the business world, cultural leaders, Chesterfields: yet all of them were gently moving their heads and bodies in harmony with the rhythm of the drum-beat, and no one spoke till the throbbing waves of sound ceased to invade the deep silence of the room. Then, and then only did one of the older men speak, in perfect English, with well chosen words and a pronounciation that could only have been gained at Oxford.

"We are so glad to have you gentlemen with us this evening. It means so much to us. When Mr. Morosco Acquoine decided to join us we looked on it as the usual thing for a man of his position to do, but when you, Mr. Jules Gerome, not only threw your lot in with ours, but in addition offered us twenty million for propaganda purposes, we considered it an event. It is very unusual for a man like you, with your boundless wealth and great influence, to freely offer such a gift: in fact, Sir, it is a magnificent gesture, and one for which you will be well repaid. I am sure that nothing but the most deadly hatred of the white race could have impelled you to take such an important step. May we ask the details leading up to that hatred?"

"I will be glad to tell you about it. I was but a mere slip of a lad in Indo-China, just a bit of a boy, when I had a difference of opinion with an overseer. Unable to conquer me in a fair fight, he secured help, had me thrown to the ground and then kicked me in the face, knocking out several of my teeth. So extensive was the damage, that I have to wear a rather large upper plate, which I will now show you, as proof that the sordid tale is true." Mr. Gerome placed before them, on the polished surface of the mahogany table, an upper plate, left it there for a full minute and then replaced it.

"I felt confident," continued the first speaker, "that something like this had happened to you. I am sure that it makes us more willing than ever to admit you to our councils. As we have some moments to spend before this other chair is occupied, I will take the opportunity of explaining to you very thoroughly just what we are doing and how we are doing it.

"You no doubt are thoroughly familiar with the effort made throughout the world to advance the interests of our race. England freed her slaves by purchase, while the United States made them free, solely as a political movement, to enable the Northern States to win the Civil War. After that war, various efforts were made by well meaning individuals and organizations to help the negro rise economically but never socially. Throughout the white world, but especially among the Nordic peoples, the Caucasians could never forget that they were white and the negro was black, just as if the matter of color made any vital difference. That was the way they felt—we produced poets, playwrights, musicians, authors of no mean ability—and while we were made much of—they could never forget that we were black. Ten years ago a few of us gave up the effort, and looked for a way of escape—not from our race—but from our color. A peculiar and fortunate combination of circumstances made some of us feel that the hand of God was in it and behind it, though no doubt our enemies more likely call it the claw of the Devil.

"We were fortunate in securing the aid of a chemist and a physician who was more of a scientist than a doctor. We pooled our finances, established, after the greatest effort, a fund of over a million dollars and handed it to these two men. Somehow they were to produce wealth and whiteness. We believed at the time that white bodies were useless without wealth and that wealth was of no avail with discolored epidermis.

"These two men toiled, but it was a labor of love. Within a year they had expended the million. We raised another million. We sold all we had, borrowed all we could, stole as we might, and then we worked. One of us was a Pullman porter, another a valet, and one even worked as a street cleaner. Living on almost nothing, we gave our combined income to the cause. At the end of three years the chemist produced a few diamonds, but the market could not absorb enough of such stones to satisfy our ambition, and we urged him to concentrate upon gold. To our great satisfaction he succeeded, not in making it, but in extracting it. You no doubt are aware that there is gold everywhere, even in the air, but in such minute quantities as to make it commercially valueless. Our chemist invented a means of separating it from the ocean. The details are of no interest to you at this time, but we built a yacht with a twelve-inch pipe running through it to a central laboratory and then to the stern of the ship. The water simply ran through the ship, while the chemist smoked his pipe and the Captain kept one eye on the weather. Periodically they came to port and unloaded their cargo—a most interesting performance, as far as we were concerned. Of course we put the gold to work; idle wealth is useless to everyone. The money was invested and reinvested till the original source was concealed by all the changes, and then it was brought to America.

"We had no trouble in buying anything we wanted to buy. I assure you that selling a man something for actual cash and meeting him socially are two different things, especially if one man is a negro; anyway we bought stocks, bonds, real estate, and in some cases even secured control of railroads, but even though we

were the owners, we could not elect the officers, or even the directors: we had to keep our activities covered.

"We spent a lot of money in education: every young man of promise, with clear complexion and regular features was sent to Europe to be developed along some distinct line that would be of benefit to us if we ever could become white. You can easily understand that we were in a position to buy a city, even buy New York itself, if only we could become white: that is what we hoped our scientist would accomplish—and he did.

"FOR centuries there has been a disease known to Dermatologists as vitiligo or leukoderma—but perhaps it would be better to let Dr. Semon tell you the story. He deserves all the credit for it—it is his discovery, and he can explain just what it means better than I can. Dr. Semon, will you kindly continue elucidating the narrative?"

"With pleasure," replied that gentleman, "and I trust that I shall be able to put it into plain language so our friend can follow the thread of the argument. You see the difference between the negro and the white is mainly a matter of pigment, and the medical literature showed that now and then, very rarely it is true, but often enough to cause scientific attention, the pigment of a black man disappeared, leaving him white. Levi, the Parisian, described three such cases in 1865: Hall of Louisville reported a case, while many others have occurred in the West Indies. My task was to find out just what happened in such a case to take the pigment out of the skin and keep it out. Some investigators thought it was a complication of syphilis, while others considered it to be due to a disturbance of the glands of internal secretion. That was my problem—and I am happy to say that I solved it—after many sleepless nights. My first cases were of the criminal class and several of them, killed under unpleasant circumstances, attracted the attention of the Secret Service. After that we were more careful of our cases and avoided any further notoriety.

"To put it briefly, I developed something like a serum. The dose was rather bulky at first and the serum needed at least three months to finish its work, but now five drops, given through a hypodermic needle, turns a black man white in twenty-four hours. In the case of an octoroon with regular features, the final result is perfect—almost too perfect. I often advise several weeks at the seashore to add a coat of tan.

"When we knew that we had a treatment that we could depend upon, we were able to advance more rapidly. All of our brilliantly educated men received the serum and were at once given positions of trust in the various corporations we owned. The women we treated were married to white men and used as spies, and it is only fair to state that not one of them in any way betrayed the trust we placed in them. Over a thousand of our comrades have been white for some time.

"We built this building and called it the Center Internationale. The first fifty floors are rented to the public but, from that level on, admission is only granted to our comrades. You will be interested in the use we make of these upper fifty floors. There are offices, laboratories and store rooms, and most important, our Temple, where two thousand of our race can worship or meet in our fortnightly consultations. We run our business according to the most approved methods: for example, we have over ten million of our race in America thoroughly card indexed.

"Naturally you will want to know something of our plans for social equality. While we do not encourage it, we have not taken any definite steps against inter-marriages with the white race. If one of our intelligensia is turned white and he wants to marry a white woman, we permit the marriage. Of course they have had and will have children of mixed blood but our physicians inject one drop of serum into the child at birth and any tendency to develop pigment is at once checked. As I told you before, our converted white women are encouraged to marry into the Caucasian race so they can become spies. As our men and women are always wealthy, they have had no difficulty in contracting suitable marriages. For example, one of our women is the daughter-in-law of Mr. B. Bailey Biddle, the President of the New York Bankers' Association. As my interest is wholly with the development and use of the serum, I will stop talking and let some one else take over the story of our plans."

The first speaker now resumed the thread of conversation.

"Now you can understand, Mr. Jules Gerome, that, with unlimited gold at our command and a positive method of destroying the pigment in the skin, the only question remaining to be solved was how far we should go and whether we should take any steps to make the entire negro race white. This has been very carefully considered by the gentlemen you have met tonight, who are known in our organization as THE POWERFUL ONES. Our final decision and the plans for putting them into operation will be explained to you at this time by our Mr. Koons."

And at once a dignified looking man, seated next to Mr. Morosco Acquoine, began to tell his part of the plans.

"I WAS selected for this work, Mr. Gerome, because I had had some experience as an organizer. Several negro organizations, such as the one known to white folks as *THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF I WILL ARISE*, owed their beginning and popularity to my efforts. Naturally it was not at all hard to wield the negroes of the United States into a compact, well functioning secret society, especially when they found that there was no expense attached to membership, but finally there would come a white skin and social equality. Our organization contains practically every negro in the States, well divided into small Lodges and each Lodge has either a physician, a dentist, or a nurse capable of giving a hypodermic. After we made up our minds to extend the benefit of a white skin to the entire negro race, it became necessary to prepare over ten million hypodermics, each loaded with the five drops of serum necessary to decolorize one person. These have been packed up into small packages, each bundle containing enough doses to care for the membership of one Lodge. Each bundle is carefully labeled. Their distribution begins tomorrow morning. We will allow enough time for all the packages to be delivered; then all over the States, on the last day of the year, these hypodermics will be emptied under the skins of ten million negroes. On the next day, the first of January, in town, city and country, on sugar plantation and stock-yard, our race in this part of the world will become white. Do you see the idea of choosing that day?"

"Indeed I do!" replied Gerome, enthusiastically. "It will be a new year, the first day of a new life for the race."

"That is partly correct, but remember that it was on this day that Lincoln issued the final decree of his famous Emancipation Proclamation, giving liberty to our race. On the same day we will give them white skins. Of course we cannot at this time fully realize the disturbance that this will cause those who think they are the actual rulers of this country. No doubt they will be considerably agitated. But what can they do? They cannot kill us: in a large proportion of the cases they will not even be able to recognize us, any more than they have been able to identify the thousand

of us in New York City. We expect some trouble and are prepared for it. In fact the fifty-first floor of this building is a carefully prepared arsenal. We have enough trench mortars and high explosives there to do so much damage that just the mere threat will make the leaders of this city willing to agree to any compromise.

"Once these millions of negroes are made white, we will start them in business. With white skins, unlimited capital and boundless ambition, they will easily secure control of the commerce of the nation. We will fill Congress with them. The whites will elect a President, a white President, but he will be one of our race. If a man can be elected a Senator by spending half a million, we can elect a President by spending two hundred million. With the States in our control, we will go on and conquer the world."

"It is an ambitious programme," said Jules Gerome. "I am glad that I am considered worthy of having a part in its execution."

"One more thing," said the man who, up to that time had been silent. "I am the man who planned this building. Normally there is ample communication between the upper and the lower half, but by my side is a button. I press that button and that communication is destroyed. Every stairway is blocked, every elevator out of commission. At the present time there are over a thousand of our comrades worshipping in our temple. I press this button and they stay in the upper half till I press it again. They cannot even get out through the windows. We have enough food for a prolonged stay. Of course an army could eventually conquer us, but in doing so, it would destroy the richest part of the city. The point that I wanted to make is that when I press the button, as I am doing now, no one can either enter or leave this part of the building."

"How interesting," murmured Mr. Jules Gerome.

"And now," said the first speaker, "we have confided freely to you our hopes and ambitions. What is your opinion of the programme?"

"Stupendous!"

"Are there any questions you wish to ask us?"

"Yes. Why did you go so freely into all these details? It seemed to me that you wanted me to know all about everything."

"We wanted to tell you about it, because we were sure that you would never betray us."

"Your confidence in me touches me deeply."

"We know that you will never reveal anything to any of our enemies."

"I am pleased that you think so highly of my integrity."

"I am sure that the future will show us that we were not mistaken."

"Undoubtedly."

"Then we will go on with the evening's work. As you are a new brother, we wish to present you with a bouquet of flowers. Have you any choice?"

"None at all."

The man reached under the table and handed him some flowers.

"Then in the name of our cause we, THE POWERFUL ONES, present you with a dozen red carnations."

Gerome took them with a slight bow.

"I thank you," he replied. "A very appropriate selection."

"We also wish to give you a small animal, a mascot, an emblem of our race." He clapped his hands, and at the signal a subservient, whining Serbian entered the room and handed him a black puppy.

Mr. Jules Gerome took the trembling puppy in his hands, and rubbed his cold nose against his cheek. Then he put it into the warm protection of his Tuxedo pocket.

"I thank you for the little fellow," he said softly. "I have always been fond of dogs, especially little ones. And now what?"

Just then a door opened and there entered the room

. . . . . .

GEROME heard the shuffling of footsteps behind him, but he did not turn his head to see who was there.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw a hand coming over his shoulder, a large hand in a kid glove, and in the hand were two envelopes. These were dropped on the table in front of him. Gerome recognized them—one his report, the other the letter to his wife.

"The game is over, Mr. Taine," whispered a velvety voice in his ear.

"I am half inclined to agree with you," replied Taine of San Francisco, putting the two envelopes in his pocket.

Then the shuffling continued—toward the direction of the empty chair.

Taine looked straight in front of him, but Mr. Morosco Acquoine collapsed, almost fainting in his chair. He had seen the occupant of the chair before that person had come into the vision of Taine.

In fact Taine was thinking so fast and so hard that for a few seconds he was not looking at anything.

"Then the velvety voice broke the silence.

"Mr. Taine, will you please look at me. I want to talk to you and it is difficult to talk to anyone who does not seem to pay attention. In fact I am not used to being ignored."

Taine took a deep breath, turned his face and looked at the occupant of the chair.

"Are you not rather surprised, Mr. Taine?"

"I certainly am," replied Taine, of San Francisco.

And he really was.

For in the chair sat a woman—a well formed, rather beautiful woman, in a white satin gown, embroidered with pearls and spangles. She had on long white gloves, which reached above her elbows, but the upper arms were bare.

A golden coronet set with diamonds circled her brow.

But the thing that had surprised Taine was not her sex, but her color.

She was jet black. She smiled at Taine, and for the first time in his life, Taine was afraid. Then she started to talk.

"All great organizations, Mr. Taine, must have a religion to hold their units together. We recognized this early in our history and as even the best of us were only a few hundred years from Africa, we decided that some type of Voodoo worship would appeal most to our followers. Of course nominally we are Catholics, or Episcopalians or Baptists, but when we worship in the Temple, we bow down before the serpent and I am proud to be the High Priestess. Our particular representation of the God is over thirty feet long, and at present is restless and rather hungry. It is a species of boa constrictor; you will recall that they do not bite, but slowly squeeze their morsel of food and then swallow it whole. This particular boa is very fond of detectives, having developed that taste, from the fact that fate made it possible for him to swallow four in the last two years. Naturally, with a hungry divinity, it is the duty of his Priestess to satisfy that hunger, and we will try to do so tonight. The first part of our worship is drawing to a close but there are still some ceremonies to be attended to before we show the snake to his people and appease his appetite—for detectives. We will ask you to walk into the adjoining bathroom and remain there. When we are ready for you we will call you. You will find the window securely barred.

The revolver you have in your pocket is useless, your valet having filled it today with blank cartridges. I trust that you will occupy your time well—you might take a bath—Ourebouras always likes his food clean."

"Just one moment before I go," said Taine. "I am not a very well educated man, and I may not see this thing clearly, but I want to say a few things that happened to come to me as I sat here this evening listening to you talk. In the first place, Madam, I want to ask you a question—When you had the ability to become white, why have you stayed black?"

The woman laughed.

"Why should I want to be white—when I hate them so? I appreciate the way my brethren feel about it—perhaps I would feel that way had I a drop of white blood in my body, but as far as I know I am black—and I am as proud of that as though I were born white. I hate the white race—I want to crush them—I am willing to do all I can to make the black race white, if that is what most of them want, but personally I am perfectly satisfied with my color. I hate white people too much to be one myself."

"You need not worry, Madam," replied Taine, coolly. "Because you have shown me tonight something that I always felt, and am now sure of. Your race can change the color of their skins but they cannot change the color of their souls. No matter how white they may become, they will always remain black inside. When the tom-tom sounded a while ago these white men of education and refinement and wealth swayed in their chairs and inside them their souls fell at your feet to worship you and your snake. I have seen that sort of thing on the Congo. A sea of white-wash cannot change you. The race was made black and will stay black.

"It is not for me to say that you have not been wronged. No doubt you have, for thousands of years, but two wrongs never made a right and if you are trying to get what is due you, you are working in the wrong way to solve the problem. You are not really trying for Justice, but for revenge. You may turn the black man white but ultimately he will remain —just—a—nigger."

"I ought to kill you for that last word—but I do not want to take away the pleasure my followers have looked forward to all fall. Gentlemen, see that Mr. Taine is securely locked in the bathroom, but do not tie him in any way. I want him to take a bath if he cares to."

Taine walked around the table to Mr. Acquoine.

"I am sorry your plans did not work out according to your dreams. Be sure to give my kind regards to Florabella and tell her that being a detective is a hard life, even at the best."

Then he took Dr. Semon's arm and walked to the bathroom. As he entered, he turned and looked at the black woman.

"I remember you now, Madam. Ever since I saw you I knew that I had seen you before, sometime in my past. You used to be called Ebony Kate, in the old days of San Francisco, before the fire. You were wise in not trying the serum. If they injected a barrel of it into you, they couldn't change the color of your skin or of your soul."

"I suppose," said the woman, smiling, "that you are trying to get me to kill you right now. Shoot you or strangle you. You are trying to see if you can make me mad. Well you fail. That's what you do. You fail! So shut the door and think about things while you have time and when we are ready, we will come for you."

Taine went into the room and they locked the door behind him.

HE walked noiselessly around the little room, apparently deep in thought but in reality making a careful examination of every detail of the room's construction. He was still occupied with this task when he saw the door open. The woman he had called Ebony Kate stood in the doorway.

"I just had to come back, Mr. Taine. I just couldn't go on with it, without giving you a chance. The other men were cowards but you—anyone could see that you don't know what fear is. You is just the man I'se been alooking for. I wants you and wants you bad. Our Doctor has another drug and we have tried it enough to know that it works. It turns a white man black—black like I am. You take the serum and come and live with me. I am tired of this game here and I'll be glad to quit. I can buy any place you want—a whole island in the Pacific if you say so—youse and I would be Gods among those islanders. That's what I came back to offer you—all the gold you want, and me."

"Why not go and buy a black man?"

"I don't want that kind. I'se want a man which has a white man's mind and a black man's skin. I has lived for three years monst these converted blacks and the dope didn't do a thing to their souls. You ought to see how they act—down in the temple—when snakey and me puts on our show. White? Why the only thing white about them is their skins. You take a shot and pull out with me."

"It is my personal opinion," replied Taine, "that you do not know what you want or what is good for you any more than the others do. The only thing I admire in you is your desire to stay as God made you —and your nerve. It must take a lot of nerve for you to pull off that kind of a show—and get away with it."

The woman turned and walked to the door of the large room, the one with the mahogany table in it. Just before she passed through the doorway, she turned.

"Quite natural for you to turn me down—but I was meaning it. Of course I might have known—after you saw that I was Ebony Kate—I might have known then that it was useless for me to come back. Still, you give me credit for trying to save your life, and I could have done it—been an easy job to pick up a white man to take your place. Make yourself comfortable. I am going to lock you in here instead of the bathroom—youse can't get out anyway. Goodbye—youse can't blame anyone for this 'cept yourself."

"Oh, that is all right. A word of advice. Why not learn to talk good English when you are excited instead of that horrible dialect?"

Instead of answering, the woman shut and locked the door.

Taine went over to the door and tested it. No doubt about it being locked. Then he went over and sat down at the table, in the chair where the main speaker of the evening had sat. Taine started to think out loud.

"Just as well that I won't make a report. No one would believe me—think I was insane. What a story! This is a great life—if you don't weaken. A lot of those thousand may be in earnest but I judge that the leaders are a lot of high class criminals—well educated—but none the less crooks—smart, though—look at the way they played with me—told me everything and knew all the time it was perfectly safe. By the Seven Sacred Caterpillars! Here is a telephone right at my elbow. Hullo! Give me Rhinelander 100—Is this police headquarters? Hell!! That was Dr. Semon talking to me. Might have known they were just playing with me."

He looked at the table. There was something about a button. If the man pressed a button no one could leave the upper half of the building. Now if only he

could press that button, and then tear the wire—he would have them all prisoners even if they did kill him—and there was—no! not one button, but ten, in a row—all alike. He looked at them carefully, moving his chair closer to the table—and as he did so, his toe struck a projection—under the thick carpet.

Pulling the carpet to one side he saw a circular plate. What he had struck with his toe was the iron handle in the center of the plate. When he lifted the plate he simply saw a hole, with sides of polished metal. It was hard to tell how deep the tube was or where it ended. It was even difficult to imagine where it ended. Taine took a silver dollar out of his pocket and tossed it in. A whining sound came from the void which grew fainter till it ended in silence.

"I think I will try it!" exclaimed Taine. "Anything is better than to stay here. But first I will load my revolver. That was a good idea to carry some cartridges in my shoe heel.....Now that is done..... I feel better. I am willing to take any chance to keep that snake from eating this poor little puppy sleeping so calmly in my pocket—I personally do not think they have a snake large enough to eat a man—but a dog—that is different. Now if only I could tell which button to press. Suppose I press them all? Press them all and then jump into the tube; and jump quick too—no telling what will happen if I press all ten. I would like to stay here and see just what does happen, but I feel that no matter what is at the other end of the tube, I am safer there—than here. I will press every button, throw the table to one side, tearing all the wires from the buttons and then Fido and I will see what is at the other end of the tube."

He pressed against each button—firmly.

Then he turned the table over, tearing the copper wires away from the buttons.

Then he went, feet first, into the polished tube.

He went down, but it was not unpleasant.

He had an idea that he was going around in a spiral.

Suddenly he dropped out on a well padded floor—into a well lighted room. It was evidently a bedroom. A mulatto girl in maid's dress sat sewing by a dressing table. Taine had her covered with his revolver a second before she saw him.

"Who lives here?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Madam Octavia," she replied, shaking with fright.

"The black woman?"

"Yes."

Making her go in front of him, he walked over to a window and ordered her to open it. He saw that they were on the second floor. Several blocks away the illumined spire of the Center Internationale rose towering in graceful bulk toward the foggy sky.

And even as he looked, a dull roar made the floor shake under Taine's feet. Fire burst out like a volcano from the middle of the hundred story building. The upper fifty stories writhed in a useless effort to leap into the air, trembled, and then fell, crumpling, twisting, turning like a tortured, dying animal—fell slowly—down—down—until it came to rest in the ruins of the buildings it crushed in its doom.

Taine shivered.

The mulatto, unconscious, lay at his feet.

The black puppy whined in the Tuxedo pocket and rubbed his wet nose against Taine's hand.

The San Francisco detective walked out of the apartment and down to the ground. As fast as he could, he walked away from that part of the city. In fact he went back to the apartment that had been his home for all those months of life as Mr. Jules Gerome. He was not afraid of his valet—in fact he very correctly judged that he would not have any trouble with him—not now.

From the apartment, he telephoned to Mr. Biddle and to Gray, Chief of the Secret Service of the city. They came to see him, and listened to his story. As they listened, they looked at the puppy, eagerly lapping cream from a saucer of solid gold.

"And now," said Taine, finishing, "if you have no objections, I will take an express for San Francisco. I have been away so long from my family that I naturally am quite anxious to see them. You can send me a check for any sum you think the job was worth to you."

2. *The Gold Ship*

FRANCE HAS OFFERED TO PAY HER ENTIRE DEBT."

That announcement, made to the Cabinet by the President of the United States, was certainly sufficient cause for the ripple of suppressed surprise and excitement that the gentlemen of that body showed. Yet these officials remained silent, for it was evident that the President had not finished with his announcement. After a rather deliberate pause, he continued:

"IN ADDITION SHE HAS OFFERED TO ASSUME AND PAY THE ENTIRE DEBT OF ALL THE ALLIES AND OF GERMANY TO THE UNITED STATES."

And still the Cabinet remained quiet.

"IF WE ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION MADE BY FRANCE, NOT ONE NATION IN THE WORLD WILL OWE THE UNITED STATES ONE DOLLAR."

The Cabinet, now feeling at liberty, started a bombardment of questions.

"What are their conditions?" asked the Secretary of Commerce.

"Where are they going to get the money?" snapped the Attorney-General.

"There's a nigger in the woodpile!" exclaimed the Secretary of Agriculture, who was from Arkansas, and though very brilliant, reverted to the homely language of the Ozarks when he became excited.

"I am unable to answer your question," said the President. "All I know is that we have received this offer from the French Government, sent through their Ambassador, to our Secretary of State. They propose to pay the entire debt at once in gold. All they want is our statement of willingness to accept their proposition. We have communicated with Great Britain and Italy, and all we can find out is that they have agreed to let France pay their debt to us on terms and conditions that they do not care to tell us. Evidently they think that so long as we are paid, the details of the agreement between them and France are not our affair. I have called this conference for an answer. What shall we say to France? First I want the Secretary of the Treasury to tell us just what such a payment will mean to us."

The gentleman called on took his time before beginning to speak. He deliberately lit a cigarette and took several puffs before he broke the silence. At last he said:

"No one can tell what will happen when a debt of over fourteen billion is paid at one time. I say no one can tell, because it has never been done before. It is true that we were able to place the world under such an obligation to us, but we took years to do it and much of it represents food stuffs and munitions of war. We did not expect that debt would ever be paid.

In truth, we did not really want it to be paid: merely wanted the world to remember that it owed it to us and would make an honest attempt to pay the interest. The French government proposes to pay the entire sum at one time in bar gold. Such a transaction would put practically all the gold of the world at our command. It would enable us to pay all the obligations of the government, retire all our bonds, solve the Mississippi flood problem, pay all the debt that the various states have contracted and do a few other things. It would create an age of prosperity: everyone would be able to sell all he has, either in goods or labor. And we would have to be very careful about the entire matter, so as to avert a panic, for at the end of such a panic a group of very rich and unscrupulous men would grow up over night. Personally, I cannot see how we can refuse the offer. At the same time, I am very much afraid of the consequences. It will make us the richest and at once the best hated nation in the world. No doubt our army and navy would have to be greatly enlarged."

The Cabinet talked the matter over and seemed to be able to arrive at no positive decision. Finally, the Postmaster General asked:

"The thing I want to know is, where does this gold come from?"

"I was expecting that question," replied the Secretary of the Treasury, "and to be perfectly frank, I do not know. There is a great deal of gold in the world, gold that has been buried and lost. After the Franco-Prussian War, France paid a large sum collected from the stockings of the French peasants. But no one knew that France had enough to pay the debt of the world to the United States."

"Make them tell us where they got it!" said the gentleman from Arkansas.

"That is hardly a question for one gentleman or nation to ask another," replied the President.

"No," agreed the Secretary of State. "But we could find out."

At this point, the Secretary of War stood up and asked for the undivided attention of all those present.

"Last year, you will recall, there was a terrible explosion in New York City which destroyed the largest building there and killed over a thousand of the richest citizens. I was called upon to send some troops to aid in policing the city, for the excitement, especially among the colored population, was very intense. I personally assumed charge of some of the details. I heard some very interesting things. Of course they may just have been rumors; I had no way of investigating them at that time. I do know, however, that the financiers were greatly disturbed over certain phases of the situation. There seemed to be a large amount of unexplained wealth pouring into the city. The President of the New York Bankers' Association knew the details, but he was suffering from the loss of a beloved daughter-in-law at the time and I did not want to disturb him. There may be some connection between that disturbance and this question: in each instance, there seems to be a large amount of gold from some unknown source."

"What was the final result in New York?" asked the President.

"Nobody seems to know—but in this explosion practically all the parties under suspicion were killed and their building and records destroyed. Of course the Secret Service of the Atlantic Coast took all the credit, but I understand that it was really a detective from San Francisco who deserved all the credit. In some way he was connected with the explosion, and, while no blame was directly attached to him, still he left the city as soon as he could. In fact, he only made a verbal report, and a very short one at that. Everyone was so excited that they let him go. Of course the Secret Service knows him—"

"I WOULD suggest, Mr. President," interrupted the gentleman from Arkansas, "that we delay answering this offer till we have a chance to get the man from San Francisco to tell us what he knows about the New York affair."

Everyone agreed that this was the wise course to follow and the Cabinet adjourned. Before they left, however, the President impressed on them the necessity of keeping the entire matter strictly a secret. He was afraid that even a rumor might cause a sharp disturbance in the stock market.

So, through various channels, the message was sent to Taine.

That gentleman was somewhat gloomy when he entered the office of the Chief of the Secret Service in San Francisco.

"I have good news for you, Taine," said the Chief.

Taine started to smile, as he replied:

"Have they decided to accept my resignation?"

"Resignation nothing! Orders for you to go to Washington to see the President."

"If it has anything to do with that New York affair, I quit—right now. Nothing more than that would be needed for me to quit—pension or no pension. There was a girl there, Florabella was her name, and she used some kind of a perfume—it hung to me like a lost soul—and Mrs. Taine did not like it—that is, she liked it well enough to be hunting for it ever since for her personal use—and she did not like to think of another woman using it around me. One more perfumed woman and my happy home becomes a harpie's Hell. You let me stay here and work with the bootleggers and Chinamen. Send somebody else to Washington.

The Chief shook his head.

"Nothing doing. This telegram says that they want you and no one else. You haven't lost your morale, have you?"

"Oh! My morale is all right, but I haven't any enthusiasm left after that New York experience. I have shot gunmen in my life. They had a gun and I had a gun and I got them before they got me—but this other affair in New York was different. Of course I cannot ever be positive—that is, I cannot be sure that I killed those thousand people in the hundred story building, but I do know that I pressed those buttons and in about two minutes Hell broke out in that part of town."

"But they were going to kill you!"

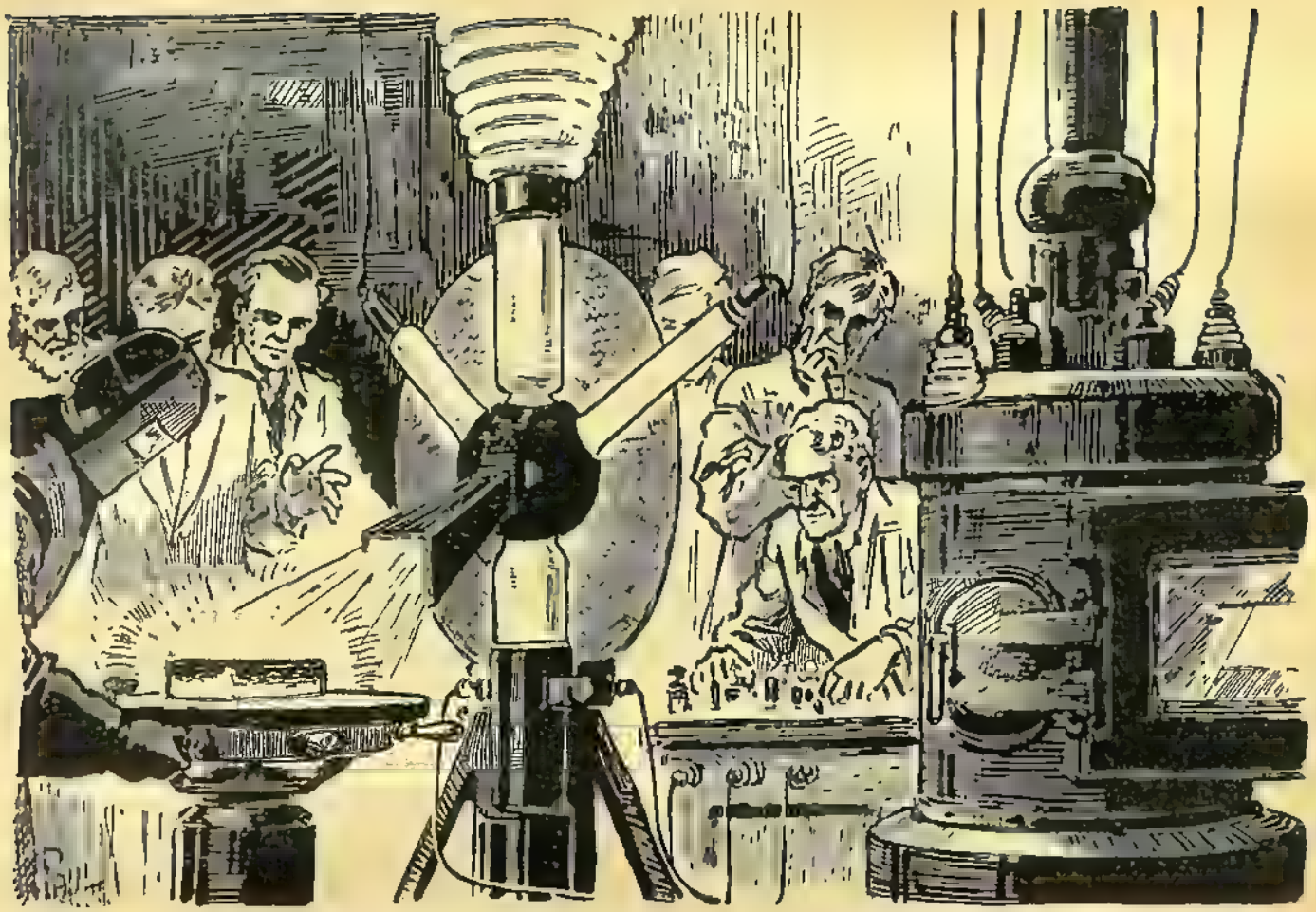
"Maybeso—maybeso. We shall never know about that. Personally, I doubt that the snake was large enough to swallow a man. Of course, there might be one big enough, but how could they make the snake do it on request—before a thousand people? That part seems unreasonable. It might have been a mechanical snake. How about that?"

"Well, they are all dead now. There is nothing more to be afraid of as far as they are concerned."

"Looks that way: but perhaps the leaders escaped. None of the bodies were identified—there might have been some way of escape. That was a smart bunch of crooks, Chief, and they made me feel like a prune. Oh! They were going to kill me some way, and I don't want a second dose of their medicine."

But the Chief insisted that Taine would have to go to Washington.

And it ended in Taine's saying good-bye to his family and a little black dog. Once again he started eastward, knowing nothing about the problem except that he was to see the President of the United States.



Finally they made something that looked like gold and was gold, only it could be changed back to mercury and lead. It was amusing to watch them play with it after they once found out how to do it.

HE was met at the Union Station by a "plain clothes" man and from there he was taken to the White House. Soon he was ushered into the President's office and introduced to that gentleman and the Cabinet members, and seated at the President's right.

"Mr. Taine," said the Secretary of the Treasury, "we understand that you were working in New York at the time of the explosion of the Center Internationale. In fact, it is stated that you were one of the prominent figures, perhaps the most prominent one, connected with that problem. We want you to tell us about it—just the main outline of the story now."

"There is not much to tell," said Taine, modestly. "There was a group of negroes who called themselves THE POWERFUL ONES. It was their idea that they could turn the whole colored race white, and somehow they had enough wealth to at least think of buying the whole of New York City. I met the ring leaders the night of the explosion and they told me a good deal of what they were going to do in the future—you see they thought they were going to kill me that night, so they figured that it was perfectly safe to tell me.

"Did they tell you where they got their wealth?" asked the President.

"Yes, from the ocean. They said they had a ship with a twelve-inch tube running through it. The ocean water ran in one end and through a laboratory and out the other end, and they took the gold out of it. At least, that is what they said. It seems they had an expert chemist doing the work for them."

"That does not seem possible," replied the President. "There is no gold in sea water. Suppose we send for one of the chemists from the Department of Agriculture. We might as well settle that part of the problem now."

The chemist was sent for. In the meanwhile, the President passed the cigars around. Taine refused.

"I do not smoke, thank you," he said; "the tobacco injures the enamel of the teeth and once that is injured the teeth soon decay: then the destruction is irreparable."

The chemist was a wrinkled old man who had spent his lifetime pouring various different reagents into test tubes in order to see and smell the results. He lost no time in answering their question, and snorted disdainfully at such ignorance.

"I thought that everybody knew there was gold in sea water. It is in the form of gold chloride and is present to the extent of one millionth of one per cent. Certainly it can be extracted by electrolysis, but it would cost five hundred dollars for every dollar's worth of gold you would get. Lots of people have tried to invent a cheap process, but it has never been done on a successful commercial basis. Anything else? If not, I'll be hurrying back to the laboratory."

"Just one minute, Professor," interrupted the Secretary of War. "Do you suppose that the time will come when man will discover how to make gold?"

"Now you are talking about something interesting," replied the old man, in a sprightly tone. "When you go into alchemy you turn an everyday chemist into a dreamer of dreams. For thousands of years chemists have been trying to do just that. Dr. Dee and Edward Kelly described the exact process in thirteen steps. Athotas the Mysterious was always able to supply his needs and taught the art of making gold to his pupil and friend Cagliostro. They either made the gold or were able to cause others to believe they made it. The arguments pro and con are difficult—it is not a question of chemistry. It goes into metaphysics and philosophy."

"Please, Professor, stop talking so much and tell me this. Do you think that it will ever be done? Have you ever met anyone who thought he could do it?"

"No, it will never be done—that is, I do not think it will ever be done. But I had a young man working under me some years ago who did a good deal of work in that line. In fact, he seemed to be of a rather extraordinary intelligence for a negro. He knew a lot about metals, but we had to discharge him—caught him pilfering one day—pity though, because he really was a wonderful metallurgist. I think his idea was that if he could only divide the atom into electrons and protons and then put enough of these together in the right proportion, he could make gold. He did make something that looked like gold, but it wasn't. I tried to get his confidence, but he was suspicious of me; anyway, he left before anything definite was established. Since then, I have been so busy working with corn rust and one thing and another, that I have not had time to do any work on gold, let alone think about alchemy. Why, men go mad if they think too much about it."

"You can return to your laboratory, Professor. Thank you very much," said the President. After the old man had gone, the Chief Executive turned to his Cabinet.

"This has been a profitable meeting, gentlemen. I am neither a scientist nor a detective, but I believe we are beginning to see the light. There is a gold ship, but it does not take the gold out of the ocean. It is simply a floating laboratory and the chemist is no doubt the negro who was discharged for stealing from the Professor. He is one of this group of criminal negroes and he supplied the gold they were going to buy New York with. Failing in their plans to turn the negroes in America white, he and his confederates have in some way induced the European nations to let them pay the debt. Perhaps they asked for social equality in return. But I doubt England's willingness to grant that. They will pay the debt, in gold, and then they will combine and make some other metal, like platinum, the standard. They will refuse to trade with us unless we accept the same standard, which will ruin us commercially. Our gold will be valueless and it will take us years, maybe centuries, before we could resume our place in the world. We could not even use a gold standard in America, if it became known that gold could be made like sugar or alcohol. If we accept the offer, we will be ruined; if we refuse, we will invite the ridicule of the world and perhaps a devastating war. What is your suggestion?"

"I believe," replied the Secretary of State, "that we should accept the offer, conditionally: that is, we will accept it when it is delivered in New York City. Suggest that the gold ship be guarded on its voyage by a combined fleet of warships from all the nations."

"But I thought we did not want the gold!" said the Secretary of the Treasury.

"We don't, but it would never do to say so outright. We will accept their offer, but the gold ship will sink on the way over."

"Excuse me," said Taine of San Francisco, "but how do you know it will?"

"I know, because you are going to sink it—on a clear day, with a calm sea—you will sink it and not a single person will be drowned. Then you are going to spend your spare time in hunting up this gold maker and put him out of business."

The statement caused the greatest excitement. Everybody talked at once—that is, everybody except Taine. He simply stared at the man who had proposed such a programme. The Cabinet members, however, seemed to feel that this was a very favorable solution to the problem.

"But how am I to do that?" Taine asked.

The President threw away his cigar and coughed rather nervously before he replied.

"You will use your own discretion, Mr. Taine. I do not think it would be wise for any of us to know just what you do or how you are doing it. All we want is results—yes—that is all—results. We will help you all we can and you can call on any of the departments for aid in any way. You just go and sink that ship on the way over—and sink it deep. I understand there is one place where the ocean is five miles deep—that would be the place of our choice."

"It is a wonderful opportunity to serve your country, Mr. Taine," said the Secretary of State.

"And just think," interpolated the Postmaster General, "you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have done something that no other man in the world has ever done before."

"I never thought of that," said Taine. "That will be of great help to me when I am going down with the ship, five miles down."

"Ah! You don't get the idea," growled the man from Arkansas. "Use your imagination, man! After the ship goes down, you swim to the U. S. battleship and get saved. How do you suppose you are going to finish the job if you get drowned when it is only half done?"

"Got any more suggestions?" asked Mr. Taine, of San Francisco.

"Not one," replied the President. "I will see that you are at once provided with all necessary credentials, and all details of every kind can be attended to by the Chief of the United States Secret Service. That entire service is at your command. You can draw on the Treasury for any sums you deem necessary. We will assign as many of our operators to help you as you require. The entire resources of the Government are at your disposal secretly—but under no circumstances can we openly assist you. If you succeed, you will find that your reward will be commensurate with the gravity of the undertaking, and now we will adjourn and I beg of you one and all, to observe the strictest secrecy in regard to the entire affair."

Taine went directly from the White House to the laboratories of the Department of Agriculture. There he spent several hours with the old Professor. The next day he visited the Secretary of the Treasury and talked over finances and some other details. He immediately left for Cornell University where his letters of introduction placed the entire department of Metallurgy at his disposal and brought to that college the most brilliant specialists from the Westinghouse Electrical Company. This act also involved consultations with men from the Naval Department and Cramp's Ship Yards in Philadelphia. Following all this Taine disappeared.

THE Secretary of State, acting for the United States and for the President, wrote to the European nations, through proper channels, that their offer to pay the war debt was accepted, with thanks. He asked that the gold be concentrated at some port in France, placed on a battleship and be escorted to New York by a fleet composed of battleships of all the nations. At New York it would be weighed, and the representatives of the allied nations would at once be given their receipts.

Some weeks after this communication had been sent and acknowledged, the Ambassador from Great Britain called at the White House, by appointment, to eat breakfast with the President and the Secretary of State. The Ambassador was a tall, white haired aristocrat, with a hooked nose, and a decided limp (his leg having been broken during the World's War). While

somewhat unused to such fare, he seemed to enjoy the buckwheat cakes, honey, soft boiled eggs, broiled mackeral, lamb chops, doughnuts and coffee. In fact, the occasion caused him to slightly loosen both his coat and his dignity. The waiters were dismissed and then the President said:

"Well?"

The Ambassador almost smiled.

"Of course all this is strictly informal, Gentlemen, but at the same time you can rely on me as representing my Government in what I say. We could not at this time deliberately insult all of Europe, so we were forced to accept the offer of this group of rich men who proposed to underwrite the entire war debt. All we asked was that the gold we were to pay the United States, our share of the debt to you, be brought to London, and be there repacked before it was taken to France for the final shipment. This was agreed to by the powers, and the gold is in London at the present time.

"Blood is thicker than water, and my Government did not fancy the looks of the transaction. We found that some of the nations had granted large pieces of land to these financiers, but even worse than that, several of the powers had secretly promised social and political equality to any of the negro race that might settle in their country. Fancy that!

"We wanted to pay you if the other nations did, and all these people asked of us was an issue of two per cent, long term bonds, but we just felt there was something wrong with that gold. Because we could not find out what was wrong with it, did not make us feel any easier about it. For this reason my Government decided to keep the gold they had borrowed and send over our own gold from our reserve. It took just about all we had on the island to do it, but we finally raised the amount and we know that it is all real gold. Next month we are going to send it to France—and we just wanted you to know that we did the right thing. The friendship between the two great nations of the world is far more precious than a few billions in gold, and if there is anything wrong with the gold we borrowed, we wanted to be the ones to suffer. I wish to state also that we have been approached with the proposition that platinum be made the monetary standard in place of gold. So far we have been non-committal in our answer, as we could not imagine the reason for thinking of such a change, when gold has been the standard for so many years."

The President tried to control his feelings, but it was some time before he could reply.

"That is a splendid way for your Government to act. For weeks we have been distressed over this affair and our worry was increased by the knowledge that Great Britain was a party to the transaction. Your statement this morning shows me that no matter what happens, we can depend upon your friendship. I trust that the two nations will always remain in harmony about the great things in the life of this world, and together try to keep the world in peace and, at least in outward harmony."

Soon after, the Ambassador left. The President and the Secretary of State remained seated, looking strangely at each other. Finally the President broke the silence:

"Have you any idea where Taine is?"

"Not the least. He has just disappeared."

"As I remember it we instructed him to sink the gold ship."

"Exactly."

"Of course we did not know at that time what we know now."

"We certainly did not."

"If he sinks the ship now, it will take with it those billions of actual gold from the banks of Great Britain."

"It will. Of course it will."

"There may be something wrong with some of the gold but this from London will be sunk."

"Yes."

"It will be lost. No good to them or to us. Better find Taine and tell him to leave that ship alone. We can take chances on anything rather than have England think that we have been false to her."

"I'll try to find Taine—but—I have tried for some weeks to locate him and he is gone. Do you think we ought to notify France to be on her guard because we have found a plot to sink the ship."

"We cannot do that without giving them some reason. But Taine cannot sink the ship without being near it or on it. Suppose we send a dozen men from San Francisco, who have worked with him, to France. If they find him, we can at least ascertain how far he has gone with his plans."

This seemed such a good idea to both of them that a telegram was despatched to San Francisco, and eight detectives were rushed across the continent and over to France on the fastest cruiser. They did their best—and failed.

IN the meantime a fleet of warships were gathering in the harbor of Bordeaux to act as a convoy for the French steamer which was to carry the golden treasure over to the United States. Most of the nations were only represented by one battleship but Great Britain, France and the United States each had two armed and floating fortresses. The treasure was placed in the middle of the ship in a specially constructed strong room. It was placed in small boxes, each holding two hundred pounds of gold and on the outside of each box was a number and the name of the nation it was from.

On the steamer were representatives of each nation and in addition several of the small group of bankers who had advanced the loan to the allied nations and Germany. These representatives were under instructions to stay with the gold till it was accepted and receipted for by the Treasurer of the United States.

While this was a financial transaction absolutely unique in the history of the world, it had been kept such a close secret that the newspapers could only guess what was behind the gathering of dignitaries and battleships in Bordeaux.

The gentlemen, who were to make the voyage together, tried to be ostensibly friendly with each other but instinctively broke up into little groups. Baltic, Mediterranean, Slavic. They were all friendly to the bankers headed by the unknown and enigmatic Count Sebastian. They believed that any group of financiers who could underwrite such a loan, had unlimited funds in reserve, and each man had been instructed by his country to make the best of the voyage and endeavor to secure additional loans for the financing of another war.

Count Sebastian was a striking man in many ways. His deadly white skin stamped him as a recluse, one who spent hours in study out of the sunshine. Yet he was strong, well built and seemingly a young man, even though his hair was snow white. His three partners on the ship were all aristocrats in appearance and strikingly like him in many ways. They all had white hair. They were all educated and possessed a maximum of culture. It seemed to the English representative that they resembled the average Oxford graduate in many ways.

Just a few days before the day set for leaving Bordeaux, Count Sebastian astonished the French Government by announcing that his group of bankers had invited several ladies to make the trip as their guests, and that the two married bankers would bring

their wives with them as chaperones. He suggested that the French and Italian representatives take their wives and daughters, if possible, and especially invited the daughter of the President of France to make the trip as the guest of their syndicate. Apparently the trip was to be a social one in many ways. The idea pleased the nations so much, that by the time the gold ship and its convoy of battleships left the French port, over thirty ladies were on board to make the voyage one long to be remembered.

No one knew just why this suggestion to take the ladies with them had been proposed by the group headed by Count Sebastian. Even his three associates had been surprised when he made his final statement in regard to it, but for several years they had obeyed him in every detail, having learned that by doing so they were sure to be successful in every venture.

The real reason for the decision was the fact that three weeks before the ship sailed Count Sebastian had met a lady. This was not at all unusual for one of the richest men in the world and a bachelor. The unusual part about this lady was that she was rich, had wonderful jewels, a past full of rumor and mystery and, finally, she did not care at all whether she ever saw the Count again or not. In fact, for the first week of their acquaintance, the only time the Count could even see her was at the theater or restaurant.

There were a thousand women in France who would have been nice to the Count had they the opportunity, and it was for this reason that he was driven to desperation by the coldness of this unknown stranger. Of course he wanted what he could not get: and, try as he could, this particular lady seemed to be particularly unattainable.

During the second week of their acquaintance, she permitted him to take her out riding, accompanied by her maid. After this she allowed him to come to her table at the restaurant one evening and share a bottle of wine with her. At the beginning of the third week, with the sailing of the gold ship but six days distant, he took her out riding again and, maid or no maid, proposed marriage to her.

She started to cry.

The maid started to cry.

But when the Count left her at her hotel, she whispered a request that he call on her that evening. Feeling that success was just within his grasp, he prepared for the call by purchasing an elegant solitaire and a necklace of matchless pearls.

She was waiting for him in the small parlor of her suite in the hotel. He was also astonished to find her dressed in the veiled habit of the Hindoos. Without waiting for any questions, she asked him to be seated.

"I do not want you to think, Count Sebastian, that I am not fully aware of the honor you showed me this afternoon by asking me to become your wife. I cried merely because I felt that you would regret your decision when you learned all about me. It was for that reason that I asked you to call on me tonight. My father was French, an adventurer, while my mother was a Malay. Of course they are considered Caucasians, but three generations back there was colored blood in my father's family and no matter how you look at it, I am not a white woman. We are wealthy. I suppose that my father and mother have no real idea how much they are worth. They wanted me to come to France, pose as a one hundred per cent white woman, marry a white man, and forget them. When I first met you, I thought that the opportunity had come, but when I saw how devoted you were to me, I could not think of living such a life and thought it would be better in our separation—better that, than a life of fraud."

THE Count knelt beside her and kissed her hand.

"My dear lady," he whispered, "you have worried yourself to death and all absolutely without reason. I love you and I am going to keep on loving you. Your ancestry makes no difference to me—because I am a colored man myself."

"What?" said the astonished woman.

"Exactly that. My associates are all colored. Only some years ago we took a special treatment that gave us white skins. I will tell you all about that some day. We hoped to turn the race white—but something went wrong with our plans. If you are a negro, so am I. Your skin is white and mine is too. We have both been honest. Now, will you marry me?"

"But, Count, you are going to America in a few days. You have told me that it is the end of one of your greatest business transactions. You must forget me till you return from New York."

"Why cannot you come with me—on the boat?"

"How would that look? The only woman! Surely that would not be proper."

"But suppose there should be other women? Would you come if I invited twenty or thirty others?"

"That would be different, but do you think they would treat me as their equal, socially?"

"I am sure they will. You leave that to me, and prepare for the trip. Now, will you let me put this ring on your finger?"

In answer she extended her left hand, well covered with jewels, but with the left hand ring finger bare. The engagement ring was tenderly placed on it, accompanied by many kisses. Then the rope of pearls was examined with many exclamations of delight, and finally an engagement was made and a hurried trip to Paris planned to select a wardrobe suitable for the trip to America.

It was after this evening that the Count invited the other ladies, much to the displeasure of his associates. One of them did not hesitate to express himself, one night before they sailed.

"You know as well as I do, George, that we decided years ago that the less we had to do with women—that is, permanently—the better it would be for our plans. We broke that rule when we took Ebony Kate, and look what happened! Of course she helped hold the boys together, but I always will believe that in some way she was to blame for that explosion. Of course she was killed, and nearly everybody else except a few of us who were lucky enough to be in the vault when it happened. She and a thousand of our best men were just blown to pieces and our plans smashed with them. If we had done as we always did, we would have killed the man right away instead of waiting for the vaudeville in the temple. In consequence, he got the jump on us, and we were just lucky to escape with our lives. You let this bunch of skirts alone. Have all the women you want, but don't think of marrying one. Wait till we get through. We want nothing now but revenge and a place in the sun for our race. After we put over our programme there will be time enough for the luxuries of life."

Count Sebastian heard his friend through without interruption and without irritation.

"What you say is true, Marcus, but unfortunately, in this instance, I am really in love. I hate the white race as much as you do and have given the best years of my life to their ultimate humiliation. Perhaps we should have been better off without Kate, but you know as well as I do, that every black man we brought to New York was converted to our cause after spending one evening in the Temple. I don't know yet what caused the explosion. Of course we blame it on that man Tate, but there is such a thing as spontaneous combustion. I am sure that Kate was killed that is

all passed and gone—let's forget it. We still have the brains of the movement. I do not believe there is a bit of harm in the entire body or mind of this lady I am in love with. She is in sympathy with us—in fact, she has made me promise not to press marriage until this part of the programme is finished. As soon as the gold is delivered, we will all board the laboratory ship in New York Harbor and disappear for a while. She will go with me as my wife. She has dark blood in her and has been well educated. In our future work she will be a help to us."

"How do you know so much about her, George?"

"She told me!"

"Are you going to believe all she said to you?"

For the first time the Count showed irritation.

"See here, Marcus, don't call my future wife a liar."

The man called Marcus stopped talking and went out of the room, inwardly cursing the entire female race. None the less, when the ship sailed, there was a very beautiful lady with him, whom he introduced to everyone as his wife.

It did not increase the comfort of the President of the United States when he heard that over thirty ladies were going to be on the gold ship. He at once sent for the Secretary of State.

"I suppose you have heard the latest about the gold ship?"

"I certainly have," replied that official. "If Taine is not careful to select the right time, he will not only sink the ship and the English gold but he will also drown a few dozen of the most important ladies of Europe, including the daughter of the President of France. When they find out that the ship was sunk by our orders, we shall have some explanations to make."

"But we must find Taine!"

"You tell me how to do it. I can't find him."

"Then wire France advising that the ladies stay at home."

"Just as soon as they receive such a wire, thirty more will be determined to make the trip."

"Then let's wait till Taine shows his hand. Perhaps he will select a pleasant day and all the ladies will be saved. The American battleships are to be on either side of the gold ship and our officers can have the pleasure of rescuing these fair ladies. Perhaps a few international weddings will result."

"More likely there will be a few wars," sighed the President.

The next day he received a radiogram stating that the ships had left the port of Bordeaux.

THE next week was a living nightmare to the President and those in his confidence; but to those aboard the gold ship it was a continuous round of pleasure. The weather was perfect, the cuisine wonderful and the entertainments superb. The water was so still that on several evenings a boatload of officers came over from the American battleships and gave the European ladies a change of dancing partners.

Among the ladies none was more lovely, more wonderfully dressed or had a greater profusion of exquisite jewelry, than that of Angeline Pleasance, the exquisite Asiatic, whose engagement to Count Sebastian was now known to all. She had permanently discarded her oriental robes and appeared in the daring of the latest Parisian mode, causing her to be the despair of all the ladies and the Count the envied of all the men. To match her petite form, she had a pleasing voice and a brilliant mind. At the card table, piano or tango she was equally proficient.

To the ladies she never failed to mention her wonderful maid, Marietta. To hear her talk one would think that without this maid she would be helpless and hopeless. The maid herself was rarely in evidence, and was such a dark ugly creature that the jealous ladies declared openly that the Pleasance woman had selected such a maid simply to accentuate her own beauty by contrast.

Thus the days passed, slowly to the anxious Americans, all too fast for the pleasure seekers on the gold ship. They passed without incident or accident, the ships steaming westward as though on parade, the gold ship in the middle, a United States battleship on either side, directly in front two English men-of-war and directly behind two French cruisers. The other ships brought up the rear.

One moonlight night Count Sebastian had left the dance hall and, accompanied by his associate, the one he called Marcus, walked over to the side of the ship. Just across the lazy waves he could easily make out the details of the U. S. Ship Pennsylvania.

"That is a big ship, Marcus," he said.

"It certainly is, George."

"One or two ships like that mean a lot—but they are just symbols, Marcus. They stand for the United States. We hate her, and we have tried our best to harm her, but so far it has been like shooting an air gun against that battleship. I feel helpless when I think about it at times. Look at those guns. One shot from that twelve inch gun pointing this way would send our ship to the bottom."

"You are pessimistic tonight, George. All this thinking is the result of your being in love."

"Not at all. But look at those guns. I fancy I see smoke curling from their open mouths. I have been nervous since the night the Center Internationale went to bits. Guess I had better take a dose of bromides tonight."

"Don't take any more dope, George," pleaded Marcus. "We want your active mind, keen and brilliant and not dulled by drugs."

The night before the ships arrived in New York, Count Sebastian took his fiancée to a quiet nook on the upper deck.

"Just as soon as we arrive in New York I want you and your maid to go to the Cosmopolitan Hotel and wait there for me. It may take me a day or more to attend to my business and then we are going to be married and begin our honeymoon on our steam yacht. It is primarily a floating laboratory but the rooms are elegantly furnished. My three friends are going with us—we have thought it best to keep quiet for a while—I have not told you all, but you ought to know the main facts. This gold we are taking to the United States is synthetic gold. No one can tell it from real gold. Next week we will send to over a thousand scientists all over the world the exact method of its manufacture from mercury and lead. Just as soon as that information is published, gold will become worthless, and the United States will be a bankrupt nation. Every nation will declare platinum the standard of exchange. The United States will be exposed to the ridicule of the world. They will never recover from their humiliation."

Angeline Pleasance did not answer, but her lips gave full proof of her loving devotion to her hero. Finally she whispered:

"You tell me just what you want me to do and I will do it. I want to do everything I can to help you. You may hate the white race more than I do, but I doubt it. Some day I want to tell you the story of my maid. She also has suffered worse than death at their hands. You must be careful. I am afraid of your going to New York. They may kill you as they did those poor people in the building you told me about."

"Do not worry, my dear," said the Count, soothingly. "They may suspect something but they would not dare come out openly and harm any of us. They could not

do that without insulting the world. We cannot hurt them worse than through their pocket book. After we crush them financially, we will have a final crushing blow. Come closer and let me whisper to you * * * * * * * * * * * * What do you think about that?"

The woman sighed deeply.

"Oh! George! Could you do that? If you do, it will be wonderful! I hope I live to see that day; and to think that I am going to share such a wonderful revenge with you."

They agreed between their kisses that life was wonderfully fine.

TO the great delight of the President of the United States and his Cabinet, the gold ship finally arrived in New York. A regiment of Marines acted as guard and after some delay the boxes of gold were deposited in the Custom House. There the representatives of the Allied nations, the President and his cabinet, the four bankers headed by Count Sebastian, and several chemists and metallurgists from the Philadelphia Mint gathered to determine the value of the shipment. The boxes were placed in separate piles, each pile representing the debt of a nation. A detailed inventory was given to the President, showing in detail the number of boxes, the value of gold in each box, both by weight and in dollars. Each man in the room had a copy of this inventory.

The Secretary of State called the persons in the room to order and spoke from his position on the top of a chair:

"Gentlemen, I am speaking for the President of the United States. Realizing that you are all anxious to be through with the business of this trip, so you and your ladies will have ample leisure to enjoy the hospitality of the City of New York, I am authorized to say that we will accept without question, your statement as to the amount of gold in this shipment. We feel, however, that we should make at least a perfunctory examination of this shipment, and have determined to open, in your presence, one box from each country. This will be given a casual examination by our experts, after which we will sign a receipt in full for the debt, giving a copy on parchment to each representative present. We shall first ask that a box of gold from Great Britain be opened."

At this point the British Ambassador limped forward.

"Before you open a box of our gold, I should like to make a statement. We thought it best to keep the gold we borrowed in our English banks. We have, therefore, replaced the original bar gold with minted gold of the Realm. As this does not pack as heavily as the bar gold, we had ten more boxes made and filled. So, if you count our boxes, you will find ten more than the inventory calls for. You can open any box you wish, as I am sure you will find them all the same."

The four bankers looked at each other. Count Sebastian shrugged his shoulders.

"Gold is gold," he murmured to the Frenchman beside him.

The top was unscrewed from one of the boxes in the English pile. As the Ambassador had stated, it was filled with Royal Sovereigns.

"We shall now have the other boxes opened," said the Secretary of State.

"As each box is opened, our experts will make a simple visual examination and then we will go to lunch."

Amid a deep silence, a box was opened from the French pile. The experts from the Mint looked into it, and began to whistle. Thereupon without waiting for orders they opened a box of the Italian payment, one of the German pile, another from Turkey. Then they went and began to whisper to the Secretary of State and the President. Meanwhile, the opened boxes were being examined by the various representatives of the foreign countries and the air became blue with curses in a dozen different languages. Other boxes were opened with the same result. Finally the President asked for silence.

"Gentlemen," he began. "I do not want you to think that I am reflecting at all on your own integrity or on the honesty of the countries you represent, but in some way you have been imposed upon. Our metallurgists inform me that these boxes are not filled with gold but with some alloy which they believe to be a combination of mercury and lead. Naturally, we cannot, under the circumstances, sign any receipt for the debt. We trust, however, that you will remain as our guests for a private discussion of the matter, which, we are certain will go far toward relieving the strain of the situation. I assure you that nothing of this will appear in our American papers and the question of publicity in Europe will depend upon yourselves."

At that time some one thought of looking for the four bankers, but they had disappeared. It was probably fortunate for them that they could not be found. They had taken advantage of the confusion following the opening of the French box and slipped out of the building and into one of the taxicabs waiting in front of the building. Refusing to listen to the pleading of his three associates, Count Sebastian ordered the chauffeur to drive to the Cosmopolitan Hotel. There he rushed into the lobby and asked for the Countess Pleasance.

"I am sorry, sir," the clerk replied, "but shortly after they went to their room, the lady and her maid came down, paid their bill and left, without leaving a forwarding address."

Staggering, the Count left the Hotel and walked out to the taxi, where the other three men were waiting for him. They were driven down to a pier in lower New York, jumped into a motor boat and in ten minutes were in a steam yacht headed for the open sea. None of them talked till they were well into Long Island Sound. Then the Count took a drink and asked:

"Tell me what happened, Marcus? What in hell happened? Surely we had gold in those boxes when we left Bordeaux."

The man called Marcus took a long drink of whiskey. "Sure we had gold in those boxes in Bordeaux, but it was synthetic gold. We knew how to make it and just because we did not know how to unmake it, we thought no one else would know. Somebody was smarter than we were and that is all there is to it. The best thing we can do is to keep mighty quiet for a while. Europe will be a hotter place for us than the United States ever was—after this affair."

"But what about my fiancée?" cried Count Sebastian. "We must go back and find her!"

"Better leave her alone," growled one of the men, "and after this you cut out the love stuff when we are busy. No telling who she was, but I bet she was mixed up in it in some way."

Meantime the steam yacht kept steadily on its way out through Long Island Sound.

JUST as soon as he could, the President of the United States took the English Ambassador to one side.

"I want you," he said, "to send a full report of this to your Government; and be sure to put in all the details. Tell them not to worry about the gold they have lent us. We value your every piece of the gold you sent us in good faith is going right back to London just as fast as one of our warships can carry it. Under the circumstances, we would not think of keeping it. You had better have that other gold taken out and

dumped into the ocean. I do not know yet just what happened to that gold on the voyage but I believe that whatever it was is known to some of our scientists, and you can tell your people that the nations will keep the gold standard, and Great Britain and the United States will do what they can to make this world a better and safer place to live in."

The next two weeks were rather busy ones, spent in officially entertaining the ladies and gentlemen who had come to New York on the gold ship. All things considered, they had a rather pleasant time, and finally they left under the impression that the United States was not such a heartless country after all. Just what kind of a report they made to their respective governments was never learned. Some of the countries made an honest effort to pay their debt—while others did not, nations being very much like individuals in this respect.

AFTER the visitors had left and everything had quieted down to normal, the President started to review the entire problem carefully. He wanted to know what had happened—and he wanted to talk to Taine. The Secretary of State assured him, over the phone, that he had seen nothing of that gentleman. The Secretary of the Treasury informed him that Taine had drawn on him for a total of over one million, but otherwise had not been heard from. The Chief of the Secret Service informed him that Mrs. Taine had received several messages in code to the effect that her husband was all right and would be home soon. Just as he was giving up hope of ever seeing the mysterious gentleman from San Francisco, that very person walked into his private office.

"I thought perhaps you would like to see me before I went home," said Taine. "I knew that you were busy, so I waited till things quieted down a bit. In fact, a lady friend of mine and I have been down to Palm Beach taking a vacation. She is out in the anteroom making eyes at your secretary. Should you like to meet her?"

"I certainly should, but don't dare to get out of my sight. I will send for some of the Cabinet and we want you to tell us what happened. We are literally dying from curiosity."

A half hour later one woman and seven men were in the President's office. A stenographer was at a side table ready to take down Taine's verbal report. That gentleman coughed and rather shyly began:

"After I left you here some months ago, I went and had a long talk with that old chemist from the Department of Agriculture, and he told me that he did not know how gold was made, but that if it was made at all it was made so and so. Then I went to Cornell and found out what they knew about it and they called in some cranks from the Westinghouse and General Electric and we went into executive session. They said it could not be done and I told them that if a black man had brains enough to make gold, they ought to have brains enough not only to make it but to unmake it as well. That made them mad and they raved around a while and then settled down to work. Finally they made something that looked like gold and was gold, only it could be changed back to mercury and lead. It was amusing to watch them play with it after they once found out how to do it. We finally were able to take a piece of the synthetic gold and shoot a special X-ray at it over half a mile and, pop, it would turn back to lead. Those youngsters were bright boys, and I think that something ought to be done for them. They did all the work: all I did was just to get them good and mad. Then we found that we could shoot this long distance X-ray just like a stream of water out of a hose, and were able to send it through a sheet of steel a foot thick. After that the rest was easy. We arranged with Cramp's Ship Yard and the Navy Department to put about twenty of these special X-ray generators in the two battleships that were to act as escort to the gold ship. Just for the novelty of it and to keep the machines concealed, we hid the X-ray tubes in some of the larger guns, and all we had to do was to keep them trained on the gold ship. The metal guns, by the way, gave the X-rays a beam direction, which concentrated them on any desired spot. The naval officers were very clever in their co-operation and intensely interested and during the entire voyage the gold ship was fired upon constantly by these rays. Of course we could not be sure that it would work because we had no way of telling that the gold we made was the same kind as the gold they made. We took a chance. I was greatly pleased when we heard the news as to just how well it did work. I took the liberty of giving fifty of the men most concerned ten thousand dollars each. I have their names and I really think that some of them deserve more. You can look into the matter and do as you think best.

"Then I went over to France. I was anxious to get on that ship and find out whether the bankers were the same men that I knew in New York, but I did not want to take any chances, so I engaged the best female impersonator in the world; really he is clever, and this time he went by the name of Angeline Pleasance, a half breed from Asia. She had a lot of jewelry and I bought her some more and a new wardrobe and I dressed up as her maid. It was the first time I had done anything like that, but I had a good teacher and we sure made a hit. This lady here is Angeline, and I know you will agree with me that she is some bird. Take off your hat and wig, and show the gentlemen what you look like as a real man. Our plans worked out nicely and Count Sebastian fell for her hard and wanted to marry her. That is how we got on the ship. The Count had the other ladies along so he could take his Angeline. I saw enough of the bunch of crooks to satisfy myself that they were the same white negroes I met the night the Center Internationale blew up. I don't know for sure how they escaped. Angeline found out a few things—not as much as we wanted to. Of course we could have gone off with them on their yacht, but we felt that it was too dangerous. I have promised to pay Bill a half million for his services and he has drawn the money but I made him promise not to spend any of it till you gentlemen approved of it. So, while we were waiting for things to quiet down, Bill and I went down to Palm Beach and he taught me a lot about his business and I did a lot of practicing down there. I am not so bad myself, only it is hard to shave three times a day. I have a little memorandum of just what I spent and what I spent it for. You can have a bookkeeper go over it and audit it and the checks I have drawn on the Treasury. I think that is about all, so if you tell Bill the half million is his, we will go. I am anxious to get back home."

"Your friend Bill can have his half million and more, too, if he wants it," said the President. "We certainly do thank you, Mr. Taine. How much does the Government owe you?"

"Oh! My salary of two hundred a month from San Francisco has been going on ever since I left home. They pay my wife the money when I am out of town, so you see you really do not owe me anything."

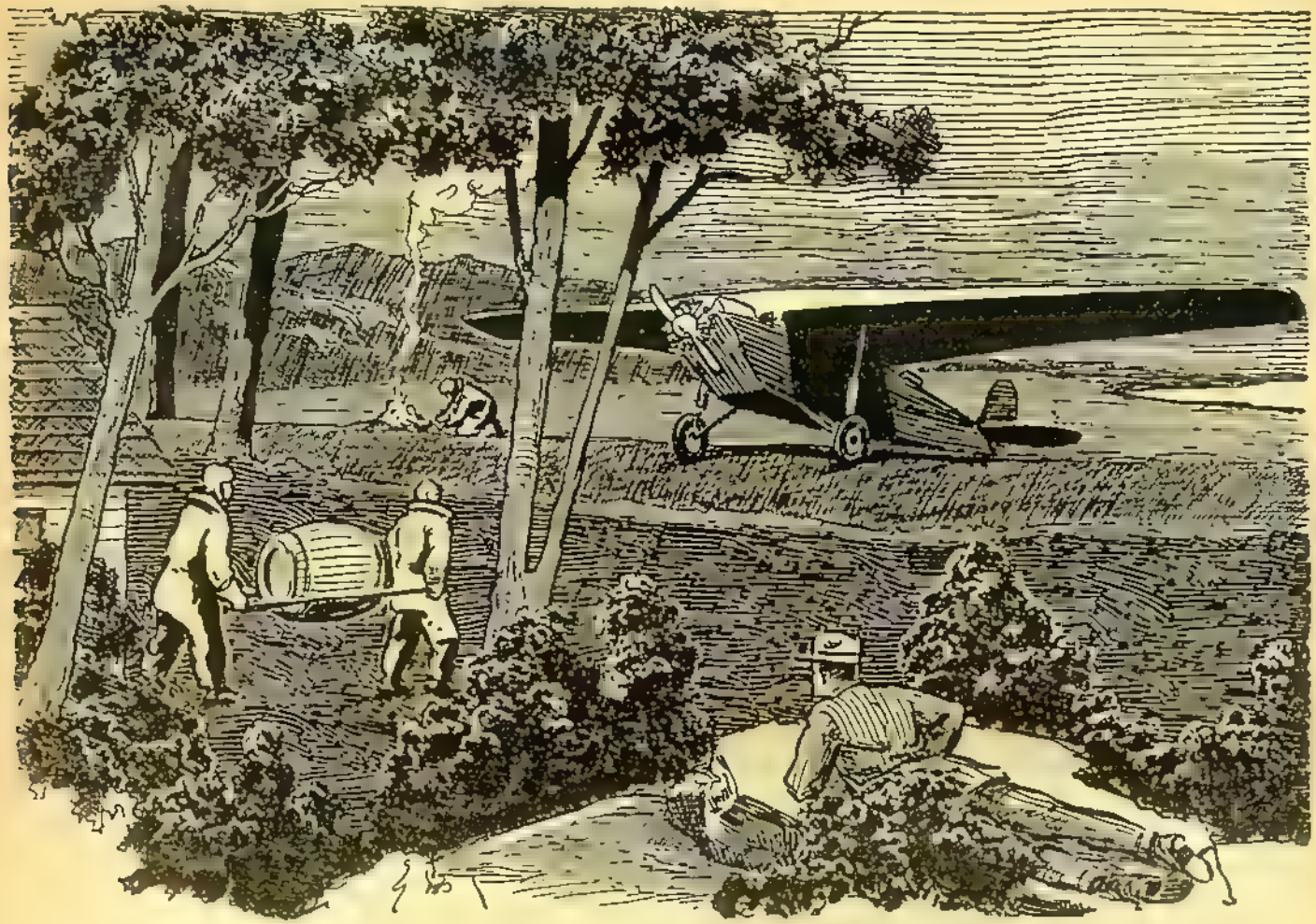
"But we want to give you something," insisted the President.

"You decide what it was worth to you and send it to the wife," said Taine shyly. "You see, she tithes all my income outside of my flat salary and that means 10

per cent for the church and 90 per cent for herself. So if you want to give me anything, just send it to her. That will please her. There is another thing I ought to say and if you will, sir, I want to whisper it to you. It is something that Bill found out and we think you ought to know * * * * * * * *"

"You surely do not mean it? They would not dare to do it!" replied the President.

"Well, maybe not, but there is no telling what they will do so long as they are alive. At least you people in Washington can be on the lookout, and now I guess I will say good-bye and take the next train west."



. . . . He sighed a prayer of thanks to his Presbyterian God when he saw them appear carrying a barrel on an improvised stretcher.

3. *The Tainted Flood*

AFTER his strenuous period of working in the interest of the United States, Taine was more than glad to return to his home and family in San Francisco. His wife and daughters were delighted to see him and the little black dog nearly barked his head off in canine welcome.

Taine reported to the Chief of the Secret Service at once and asked for and was granted a month's leave of absence from duty. They let him know at Headquarters that they had received some very nice letters concerning his work and that he had done a lot to put the city on the map of the world as far as intelligent detective work was concerned. He thanked them, shook hands all around, and went back home prepared for thirty days of peace and quiet idleness.

In honor of his return Mrs. Taine prepared a supper of stewed mutton and dumplings, a dish her husband was very fond of, but which he got only at rare intervals, for it was very hard on his digestion. This time, however, she felt that he had earned a specially fine supper.

After the dishes were washed, they all went into the sitting room. Taine's slippers were put on and he was comfortably placed in his favorite chair with the evening paper in his hands and a lighted pipe in his mouth. The black puppy slept curled up at his feet, the daughters sat around the center table studying their lessons, and Mrs. Taine talked quietly to a neighbor who had just come in to learn the latest gossip.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Mrs. Taine, to her neighbor's question, "we certainly are glad to have Mr. Taine back home again. He had a most exciting time of it this trip."

"Oh! It must be so thrilling! Doesn't he ever get frightened?"

"No, indeed! He does not know what fear is. The most horrible places he has been in with his life hanging on a thread, and yet he never is afraid."

"You must be awful proud to have such a husband."

"I certainly am. Have you heard about what the President said?"

Taine listened to the conversation while he read his newspaper and smoked his pipe. He smiled a little at his wife's praise. No one knew better than he himself just what kind of a detective he really was, and just how often his blunders had nearly been his ruin.

It was only his firm faith in predestination that enabled him to go on with such a hazardous calling. Meantime the daughters had kissed him and gone to bed, and as the ladies seemed to be very well occupied talking about church affairs, he thought he might as well take the dog out for a walk.

Without being especially noticed by his wife he left the room and, putting on his overcoat, let the eager black puppy out of the front door ahead of him. The night was cold and damp as is so often the case in San Francisco and the fog put a white halo around all of the street lamps. Glad to be back in familiar territory, Taine walked briskly down the street. He had not gone far when he had the peculiar sensation that he was being followed. Nothing irritates an operator more than to feel that he is being shadowed; it is all well enough for him to pry into the most secret life of others, but it is an entirely different matter when the tables are reversed and he becomes the hunted instead.

As soon as he was thoroughly satisfied that he was being followed, Taine started to lose his trailers. A rapid and zig-zaggy half hour was spent in jitneys, trolley cars, dashing in and out of office buildings, up and down elevators and into restaurants and movies by the front door and out by a side entrance. During this half hour, he believed that he had identified the three men who were after him, and, once that was accomplished, it was a matter of professional pride to double on them in such a way that he became the follower again. He went into a theater where he was well known, borrowed a wig and a costume and was out on the street and into the theater again inside of five minutes. Just as he was buying his ticket, he saw the three suspects leaving.

After that he felt thoroughly confident and satisfied with the game as it was being played. He soon saw that the three men were following a cold trail and in a short time they acted as though they also knew it. At least they ceased to double on their tracks, got into a jitney and started on a straight line to leave the city. In back of them was another jitney occupied by a woman.

In the course of the next hour, Taine found himself on a small balcony of a deserted house in the suburbs of the city. While the night was cold and damp, there was no wind and the increasing fog made it easy for anyone to hide in its enveloping blanket of gray. The three men he had followed were in a room in the same house, seated around a plain wooden table. He could hear their conversation distinctly as they made no effort to speak low. Their entire conduct while in this room showed conclusively that they were positively ignorant of Taine's proximity.

Taine was rather pleased, yet he was worried. The fact that he had eluded them and trailed them to their den was a source of pride to the detective. He was also glad that he had left the black dog at a neighbor's during the first three minutes of the chase. The thing that caused him deepest concern was his positive identification of the three men as the white negroes who for so many years had been plotting against the safety and happiness of the people of the United States. Twice before he had been able to block their plans, and yet he felt that conditions would be insecure in his country as long as these criminals were at large. Their presence in San Francisco, and their following him was another source of worry. No doubt they knew who he was and just what part he had taken against them. The only reason they were on the Pacific Coast was to secure revenge on the man who, practically single handed, had been able to stop their nefarious schemes. Taine was not so much worried about himself as he was about his wife and children. There was no telling what such criminals would do. Meantime, he was paying the strictest attention to their conversation.

THERE were three of them. He had seen two of them on the Gold Ship—one known as Count Sebastian or George, the other, the one called Marcus. The third was Dr. Semon, scientist and inventor. Taine had met Dr. Semon in the Center Internationale the night that building had blown up and the white negro had boasted of his discovery of a serum that would turn a black man white over night. Marcus was probably the man who had discovered the method of manufacturing synthetic gold. George was no doubt the brains of the group as far as leadership and organization were concerned. Said Marcus:

"I do not want to leave the city till we get Taine. I have a hunch that we shall never get very far so long as he is alive. A day or two one way or the other will not make any difference with our New York plans. I know a Chinaman that will slip bamboo splinters into his food and put him and his whole family into the cemetery in a few days."

"I am opposed to it!" answered the Count, decisively. "He is a very prominent person, a lot more prominent than he thinks he is. If anything happens to him, we shall have the Secret Service of the United States after us in earnest and openly. So far they have seen fit to leave us alone—that is, they made no attempt to arrest us after that gold fiasco. Taine is quiet now and his performance of tonight shows plainly that he is not going to be caught napping. We are all educated men but at the best we are not super-criminals and I think we had better go ahead with our plans and leave Taine alone. He is not going to be successful all the time. Semon, have you figured out the amount of your new chemical that will be needed to thoroughly impregnate the water of the New York reservoirs?"

"Yes," replied the Doctor. "I have everything done except the actual operation. We have the chemical in a very finely powdered form, enough of it to make a one to a million solution of all the water the City of New York uses in three days. My plan is to scatter it over the surface of the water by aeroplane on the same principle that they dust the cotton fields in the South. We shall have to make five trips from the store-house, but the plane can carry five hundred pounds at a trip and twenty-five hundred pounds will do the work nicely."

"And you believe it will work as quickly wholesale in an uncertain dilution as it did in your experiments?"

"I am confident of it. Of course, it is hard to determine just how much water there is in the pipes leading to the city, but I believe that the treated water will be used by the end of twenty-four hours and after that the lot of the people of the city will be hopeless. Even if they suspect that there is something wrong with the water, what can they do? They have to use the water to drink, to cook with, to wash their clothes, their skin and their teeth. Inside and outside of their bodies they will be exposed to the drug. The first half million cases will not be understood—the authorities will do their best to keep it quiet—the changed men and women will be kept indoors—perhaps quarantined. By the end of the third day the water supply will be pure, but by that time it will be too late."

The man called Marcus jumped to his feet, and raised his clenched hands above him as though to strike the Almighty in the face.

"What a revenge! Oh! If only it works as we think it will! Think of it! For years, from all parts of the United States the wealth, brains and beauty of the

white race have gravitated to New York. Like gods they have sat there, dictating fashion, habits and morals to the millions of people who live in the rest of the western hemisphere. Like gods they have lived here and we negroes have just been their slaves and their playthings. We were a little more than animals, and a little less than human beings. They thought we were a higher type of ape. In their vices they tainted our blood and changed our blackness to an ashy gray. Now these imitators of Jehovah are going to turn black themselves. They will go to bed drunk with power and content with life, the proud descendants of thousands of generations of white ancestry and they will wake up black. The physicians will think it is some new disease and for a few hours they will be very busy, till they themselves are blackened from head to heel. The city will be a merry Hell—for us—it will be a city of shadows."

"It will be worse than that!" cried the man called George, who on the Gold Ship had called himself Count Sebastian. "The news of what happens in that city will be kept out of the city papers—for a day, or three. Then by letter and telegraph and radio, by frightened fugitives in planes and automobiles, the word will travel around the world, *'The People of New York Are Turning Black.'*—A disease changing the color of eight million people—a pestilence touching rich and poor, great and small, the good man and the criminal! The city will be accursed. A quarantine will be established, but it will not be necessary, for no one will want to go there for any purpose save some brave men from the Public Health Service who will be sent to investigate. The business of the city will be crushed. Millions will try to leave, even though their skins are black. Outside the city, though, they will be treated as black folks. That in itself will be a rich joke. They do not realize what segregation means, but they will soon know. The negroes will despise them as painted monstrosities. If they go into a colored community, they will have to show that their parents were black before they will even be given a crust of bread. They will be unable to get work: everyone will be afraid of them and sicken at their sight. They will be lepers!"

"Other cities will follow. Chicago, Philadelphia, Denver. Soon it will not be a case of millions leaving the United States. Will they receive welcome in Europe? Will Canada sit calmly silent when ten million fugitives cross her border? In a year the proudest country in the world will be in a process of dissolution. Revenge? Why, such a thing will be worse than death. New York could overnight topple into the crater of a new volcano without causing one hundredth of the damage.

"Of course there will be some white people left. That will be another of the rare bits of sarcastic humor the situation will evolve. They will be the poor people, the crackers and the red necks and the white trash who live in the piney woods and on the mountains and drink white mule and mountain spring water. They will stay white, and won't hesitate to shoot any black man who might bring the disease to their isolated mountain homes."

"All that will happen," said Dr. Semon, "but first we must kill Taine."

"No," insisted Count Sebastian. "Let's wait. It will be more fun to watch him pretend to think when the President sends for him to unravel the latest New York mystery. He will not escape us finally. Ebony Kate will keep on the watch. Her sister works for his wife."

"Let's go," said Marcus. "The plane is in back of the house. We can make St. Louis in one flight if we are fortunate."

They left the room. Taine stayed on the balcony till he was sure they were well down stairs and then pried the window open and tiptoed into the room. He wanted to see a piece of paper that one of the men had dropped under the table. Holding it in front of his flash light, he saw that it was a map. Silently cursing the woman's clothes he had on, he went out on the balcony and dropped to the ground. Just as he landed, he heard the drone of an aeroplane starting from the other side of the house.

TAINE knew what he wanted to do; but he was not sure how he was going to do it.

On him depended the happiness of millions, the safety of his country.

He wanted to rush to his Chief with the news; he felt that the radio and the telegraph should carry the warning to the threatened city. The War Department ought to be notified and combat planes from San Francisco, Denver, and St. Louis should hunt through the air till the mangled bodies of the conspirators were burning harmlessly on the ground, owned forever more by the Caucasian race.

But who would believe him?

Suppose he told them the whole story? Told them what he had heard? It would be a tale so preposterous, so unreal and fantastic that he would be at once placed under observation in a Psychopathic Hospital. Before they found him sane, the damage would be done. Suppose they did believe him at Headquarters? What if they did send him by plane to Washington to arouse the nation? What should they tell the millions of morons in New York? That they must not drink, eat or wash till further notice? How many of them, superior adults or feebleminded, would heed and obey? How could they obey? How long can eight million people live without touching water when an apparently pure supply was flowing from a hundred million faucets? And if they did realize the danger, what would happen? Every one who could do so would leave the city—even if they had to walk. It might stay a white city but it would be an empty one. No. Try as he could there was nothing to do but to stop these men before they sprinkled the pigment-producing drug over the waters of New York. They had to be stopped and there was no one to do it except Taine.

Try as he would he could not escape his fate.

After it was all over—the danger past—the city saved for the Caucasian race—then and then only he could talk about it. . . .

But who would believe him?

He thought of Biddle, who had sent him, single-handed, against THE POWERFUL ONES. He tried to recall how the President of the United States looked when he told him that the gold must not come to the shores of America. Perhaps those two men would believe him, later, when he told them the story. It might be that his wife would understand that he was telling the truth.

He wondered if they were telling the truth!

Could white people be turned black by drinking water that had a chemical in it diluted one million times?

Was it possible for such a disaster to take place in the twentieth century?

And if it could be done, what could he do to stop it?

Just then he thought of one of his most highly prized souvenirs from his last adventure, a small visiting card with the President's name engraved on it. On the reverse of the card, in the President's handwriting, was written

The Bearer, Mr. Taine, is a direct representative of the President. All citizens are requested to render him any service he needs.

He had always carried that card with him. He had

it now in a secret pocket of an inside vest, wrapped around with five hundred dollar bills. He remembered a silly story he had learned in his high school days. Something about a god called Time who had lots of hair on the front of his head but was bald behind. If you grabbed him at all, it had to be at the very beginning, "taking time by the forelock"; once he had passed, it was too late.

Running out on the street, still feeling rather silly in his feminine array, Taine took the first jitney and started on his journey to save his country from the peril which seemed to be impending.

They started to laugh at the little woman who came running into the Government airplane station and demanded a plane to take him to Baltimore. They laughed harder when he said he wanted to make a non-stop flight. They never would have taken him to the commanding officer (who was playing poker with his staff) had it not been for the woman's tears.

"I want to see you privately!" the woman said to that officer.

"Not by a long shot!" answered the Colonel. "I have cut my wisdom teeth and there is not going to be any blackmail around this station."

"Fiddlesticks!" said the woman, starting to tear off her dress." I am Taine, of the San Francisco Secret Service. I have to get to Baltimore, to the medical school there, and I want to travel quick."

The Colonel looked at the little man who was shivering before him in B. V. D.'s and a funny kind of a vest.

"That may be so, but you travel by train."

"Look at this," said Taine as he took some paper money from around a small piece of paste board and handed him a visiting card. The officer read it on both sides; then he turned to his Adjutant.

"Do you know the President's writing?"

"I believe so."

"How about this?"

"Looks as though it might be genuine."

The Commanding Officer drummed on the table with his finger-nails. Finally he woke up from his silent thinking:

"Captain Jenkins!" he said sharply. "For weeks you have been making preparations to break the record for the longest time a plane can stay in the air. I understand you were going to try it tomorrow. Lieutenant Jones was going with you. You and Jones are to start right away. Throw away one hundred pounds of impediments and take Mr. Taine with you. Your route is Denver, St. Louis, Washington and Baltimore. I understand that he has to get there at once. If you do not want to make the trip in this fog, I will ask for volunteers."

"No need of that, Colonel," said Jenkins. "Fix the gentleman up in some clothes so he will not freeze to death and we will start in an hour. Will you arrange for some sandwiches and coffee, sir?"

In exactly fifty-five minutes, Jenkins, Jones and Taine were in the air on their way east. Taine was not at all happy. He had never been in a plane and had always been confident he would not enjoy an air journey. During the first half hour he had ample reason to know that his anticipations had been correct; there was no doubt as to his increasing sickness. After the worst of his nausea was over, he became drowsy, and fell asleep. When he awoke, they were on the ground. Jenkins asked him if he had had a good sleep and explained that they had been forced down near St. Louis by a leak in the gas line. They would have it fixed in a half hour and hoped to start at once. Did Mr. Taine want anything to eat?

TAINE looked at a sandwich, washed down the look with a cup of black coffee and said he was ready whenever they were. He was especially anxious to know if they had passed any planes. Jones laughed at that and said that the planes had been thicker than swarming bees. The sun was shining and the sky blue and clear. Taine went back to his seat, told them to let him know when they arrived at Baltimore. They wanted to know if he did not want to see St. Louis and the Mississippi from an airplane, but he said that all he wanted was to think and sleep or anything at all, just so long as he could avoid a repetition of his recent sickness. He had seen both the river and the city from the ground and that satisfied him. The two aviators looked with a pitying curiosity at the little man and made him comfortable in some blankets. He soon felt a bumping and then everything was quiet. In reality he went to sleep again —and stayed asleep till they arrived at Baltimore. It was really a fairly remarkable trip, from one side of the continent to the other in two hops, but the only thing that Taine was interested in was that he was finally in Baltimore and reasonably sure that he was some hours ahead of the three conspirators.

He said a few words of appreciation to the army officers and took an automobile to Johns Hopkins University. Here the card from the President again served him in good stead and within a very short time he was in conference with the Professor of Dermatology of that medical college.

The Professor was very properly thrilled. He had taught the subject of diseases of the skin for thirty years, and up to the present time no one had seemed to realize what a very important part of medicine it was. To have a man come all the way from San Francisco to consult him, a man with a personal message from the President of the United States, was enough honor to make him glow to the point of breaking out with a neurotic urticaria. He listened, rather impatiently, to Taine's presentation of the hypothetical case, and then, rather promptly and in as dignified a manner as though rendering a decision of the Supreme Court, he gave his answer:

"There is no disease, condition or manner of living, Mr. Taine, that really turns a white skin black. Certain diseases turn the skin yellow, for example, jaundice; or give it a bronze color, as in Addison's disease; or a dark silver as in poisoning from that metal; but no disease or drug described up to the present time can turn a white man into a negro. Of course, there are certain diseases where part of the body becomes rather changed in color but of the hundreds of such cases I have seen in my long years of experience, I do not recall a single case where the change in color was so distinct or universal as to deceive a careful observer in regard to the patient's race.

"However, in justice to myself, it is only fair to state that there are thousands of new chemical compounds which so far have not been tested in regard to their effect on the human skin. Erlich made six hundred and five arsenical compounds before he discovered the celebrated 606, the basis of all modern treatment of syphilis. There are many synthetic dyes, some of which are highly poisonous to the human organism causing rapid dissolution, disintegration and even decay of the entire body, Mr. Taine, and in some cases where poisoning has resulted from the ingestion or injection of such drugs, the skin has turned a deep purple, just before death."

Taine thanked him heartily and said he would have to go:

"I am astonished at your wonderful learning, Professor. You know a great deal about almost everything, and I certainly thank you for your interest in the matter. However, I must say that up to the present

time you have not definitely answered my question, which was, whether a white man could be turned black by drinking or bathing in water which was poisoned by an unknown drug in the strength of one to one million?"

"I do not know!" said the Professor, rather bewildered.

"And I do not know, either," said Taine, "but I am going to find out."

"If you do," said the Professor, eagerly, "will you come back and tell me? I should like to write a monograph on it, and of course I would give you a copy."

"I would expect you to give me at least one copy," said Taine, "though of course I could go to the Congressional Library and read it there."

"You will not have to do that. I shall be glad to give you a copy. I will even write my name on it, and I do not do that for everybody."

Taine heard only half of that last remark, for he was rushing out of the building before the Professor had come to the end of his generous offer. His chief anxiety now was to get to New York City as soon as he could. He would have liked to go back to Washington and talk over the problem with some of the men there, but he resisted this temptation and he rushed to the B. & O. station instead. Here he became a human dynamo and after brushing aside three office boys and actually knocking an insulting clerk down, he saw the Superintendent and in a few minutes of rapid talking convinced him that he was in earnest. But it took all of his power of argument and the President's card thrown in for good measure, to secure a special train to New York. The tale should include the details of this ride to New York in a locomotive, hanging on to the fireman, and cinders thoroughly scattered all over the inside and outside of the man from San Francisco.

He reached the metropolis of the United States at midnight. At once he telephoned to Gray, Chief of the city's Secret Service. He was in Chicago. He called up Mr. Biddle, the Banker. He was at home, but had retired for the night, and could not be seen till nine in the morning. Taine was badly worried and growing rather mad. He had a plan and he could not work it out unless he had help. The President's card was not of any value, unless he could get the right people to read it, and meantime the precious moments were passing. Hunger and fatigue and anxiety made him sweat and the drops running down his cheeks made ludicrous streaks amid the dirt and cinders clinging to his three day old beard.

He dashed over to the ticket office and had a hundred dollar bill changed. Then he ran out to the taxi stand and gave the driver of a yellow cab the address of the sleeping banker, Mr. Biddle.

After frantic ringing of the door bell, the Butler opened the sacred portals. He was very haughty in his statement that Mr. Biddle would see no one. Taine strong-armed him so thoroughly that he did not wake up for some hours and then did not have a very clear idea of what had taken place. The detective ran up the steps calling Biddle's name. A woman screamed and a man ran out in white pajamas and shot at Taine, who cried:

"Don't shoot again, Mr. Biddle. I am Taine, the detective. Don't you remember the man from San Francisco? Put that gun up. You will hurt someone shooting that way."

BIDDLE finally quieted the household and himself and then sat down in the library and listened to Taine. The banker made a very good listener. Finally the detective finished.

"What can I do to help you?" asked Biddle.

"I want to see the man who knows the most about the Croton Water Shed. The man who has been all over the grounds, who helped make the survey and had charge of the maps and blue prints."

"We will get him."

For the next twenty minutes the banker sat patiently calling up man after man. Finally he jumped up in triumph.

"I found the man," he said, "and he is on his way down town. He will be here in twenty-five minutes, pick us up and we will all go down town to his office where the maps are. I shall have to dress. What can I do for you?"

"How about a safety razor and a place to shave?"

"You can have that. How about a drink?"

"Not now. If I ever get out of this mess, I may get drunk, but not now."

"Have a cigar?"

"No! I never smoke. I find that the tobacco injures the delicate enamel of the teeth and once that is injured decay sets in and your teeth are soon lost, never to be replaced."

The banker dressed and Taine shaved and they were hardly finished when the door bell rang. It kept on ringing and finally the banker went to answer it himself. In doing so, he stumbled over the butler. Only then did Taine think of explaining to him that the poor fellow was not dead but simply knocked out by a detective's rough treatment. Immediately after that the three men, Biddle, Taine and the Surveyor, were in a taxi headed for City Hall.

"Well?" said the Surveyor, a few minutes later, in his large and orderly office, "what is the problem, and where do I come in after losing my night's rest."

"You will get your share—later," answered the Banker. "For the time being, listen to this man and see if you can help him."

"All I want you to do," chimed in the detective, "is to tell me if you can recognize this map as a part of the country around or near the Croton Water Shed." He took a small folded piece of paper out of his inside pocket and handed it to the Surveyor.

The man looked at it, and then jumped up from his chair, crying:

"Don't interrupt me!"

"We won't!" said the Banker.

"Don't make any noise!"

"We won't!"

"I must have perfect silence. I want to concentrate. I must think!"

"Certainly," said Taine, soothingly. Then in spite of his dread and anxiety, he took a pencil and pad of paper off the desk and wrote:

His mind is very delicate. He would never make a detective.

and handed it to Biddle, who read it, smiled and wrote:

Nor a banker

and passed it back. However, the man was really capable in spite of his peculiarities, for after ten minutes of the greatest physical and mental agitation, he ran to a cabinet, took out a large blue print on the scale of one inch to the mile, spread it on the table, compared it with the small map Taine had handed him, and cried:

"There it is. I thought I remembered the place. Slept in that old cabin several nights when we were surveying that part of the shed."

"Is it hard to get to?" asked Taine.

"No. There is a fairly good road within a hundred feet but no one goes there. The whole area was bought by the state and practically cleared of its population."

"Let's start," said Taine, "and get there as fast as we can."

"What's all the hurry?" asked the Surveyor.

The Banker told him in a few well chosen words. After that it was a foot race to see which one could

get down to the waiting automobile first. In no time at all they were tearing up Fifth Avenue, headed for the cabin in the woods. The Surveyor insisted on driving in spite of the protests of the taxi-cab chauffeur. Biddle, however, kept his head, and they went right back to the banker's house, where they changed cars for his seven passenger Paige. They also picked up three policemen, and then headed for the country.

The Banker's chauffeur was no mean driver himself and with the Surveyor beside him to tell him just where to turn, they had no trouble in averaging fifty-five miles an hour. There was no car trouble and no delay and yet dawn was breaking as the car stopped in the woods and the Surveyor jumped out and started to run.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Taine, catching him. "I am in as great a hurry as you are, but I do not want to be killed. Those three men may be there ahead of us and if they are, they would not hesitate to shoot us. Better go slow." His advice was followed, but the cabin was deserted.

The door was padlocked but Taine had no trouble in opening it. The party followed him inside. It was just a little cabin in the woods, a very ordinary little cabin, with a small stove and some shelves and a cot with bedding on it: but in the center of the room were twelve barrels.

They were ordinary flour barrels, Pillsbury flour barrels with the firm's label neatly pasted on every barrel, giving the exact brand of the flour and the number of pounds. The men looked at each other and they all looked at Taine. He looked at the Surveyor.

"Sure this is the place?" he asked

"Positive!"

"Then get me an ax or something and help me to get the top off of one of these barrels. Fast! No time to spend thinking about it!"

The top was soon off and they all crowded around to look in.

"Pshaw!" said Biddle. "Just flour. Suppose we taste it?"

He would have done so, had Taine not grabbed his hand just in time. Taine told him in no uncertain language just what kind of a fool he was, and as the truth began to slip into the Banker's consciousness, that man grew pale and started to sweat. Then Taine asked the Banker to come outside for a conference, as a result of which the chauffeur, the Surveyor, one policeman and the Banker started off in the Paige. Taine and the other two policemen walked into the woods and hid themselves. Telling the men to watch the cabin, the detective started off through the woods. In a very few minutes he found just what he was looking for, a meadow fairly free from brush and weeds, large enough and smooth enough to make a good landing field for a plane, provided the aviator was a little more clever than the average. It was, at the most, a hundred yards from the cabin. In the middle there were ruts in the grass which looked as though a plane had landed there on a wet day.

Then Taine went back to the policemen.

FINALLY, after what seemed ages, a large truck came up the road laden with twelve barrels and several men. Behind was the Paige car. Taine inspected these barrels, said they would do, and ordered them carried very carefully into the cabin. The men who carried the twelve barrels in, carried twelve barrels out and back on the truck. When they were through, the inside of the cabin looked just as it had before the lock had been picked. Taine put the padlock on, gave the driver careful directions and started him off with the truck. He then held a long conference with Biddle and started him back to New York City with the three policemen and the Surveyor. He then returned to his point of observation and thankfully ate the lunch Biddle had brought him.

With the exception of a hawk who persistently soared above him, Taine was alone. Not really alone for he had abundant fears to keep him company. What worried him most of all was the map. Suppose the three white negroes had suspected his presence and dropped a map on purpose? They might even have had a special cabin fixed up to deceive him. While he was locating the cabin on the map and waiting for them to put in an appearance, they might be scattering the poison over the Croton waters. Was he wrong?

Would Providence permit him to be wrong?

Was he predestined to be the savior of New York or face the world as a huge joke, an ignorant blunderer?

The afternoon wore wearily on, the setting sun sinking silently on silvery spruce trees. Another hawk joined the first in its aimless flight. No! Not a hawk, but a plane!! This way!! Sinking, settling softly, safely in the meadow. Taine smiled and rubbed his chin.

He was safe.

He knew he was safe when he saw three men come running through the woods toward the cabin: he was confident he was safe when he saw them unlock the door and disappear through the doorway; he sighed a prayer of thanks to his Presbyterian God when he saw them appear carrying a barrel on an improvised stretcher. Shortly after the distant buzz of a motor was followed by the appearance of a plane over the treetops. Taine left his station near the cabin and circling through the woods gained a viewpoint of the meadow. One man, left behind, was building a fire at either end of the field to serve as guides to the aviator as darkness came.

The plane returned in the twilight. The men again ran toward the cabin, and came back staggering under the weight of another barrel. The top was knocked off and its contents transferred to a hopper in the plane. It was rather dark but Taine was able to see part of what they were doing and guess at the rest. After the departure of the machine, the man who was left behind broke up the barrel and used the dry wood to keep the signal fires burning. The detective waited till one more trip had been made, then scratched some leaves together, covered up as best he could, and fell asleep happy in his well earned contentment. It was morning when he awoke: everything seemed quiet but he decided to inspect the meadow before leaving. He had come just in time to see the plane return, pick up the third man and start off again. He walked thoughtfully to the cabin and was not at all surprised to find the door open and the room empty. The twelve barrels were gone.

"This," said Taine to himself, "makes me believe in predestination more than ever before."

The country Taine found himself in was wooded and very sparsely settled. The only thing that he was sure of was that he was in New York state. He was also afraid that he was hungry. Within an hour he had a slight idea that he really was hungry and this idea rapidly grew till it took entire possession of him: just as he was about to despair he came out on a hard surfaced road bordering on a large lake. Greatly interested, he walked to the shore and going down on his knees carefully examined the stones and gravel washed by the little windwaves. There was a white scum there; just the slightest trace. He put some on his finger and tasted it.

Far down the road he saw smoke curling upward in

the thin autumn air. That meant fire and fire might mean food. He walked down the road and came to a neat little bungalow. The man who came to the door was soon identified as one of the water shed police. He was glad to furnish what he had in the way of food; not much, but enough to keep Taine alive. In answer to the inquiry, he said that there had been several aeroplanes flying around the night before.

By noon Taine was in New York city. Ordinarily he was a neat little man but he was far from that as he got off the train in the Grand Central Station. He went at once to the Biddle home, where the butler admitted him rapidly but with decided resentment, for he was still nursing a swollen jaw. The San Francisco man luxuriated in a long, hot bath, and a shave. The banker had a clothing man and a haberdasher come to the house and by the time Taine was through with his nap, a completely new outfit was ready for his use. A valet helped him dress, and served him a very light lunch in his room. By dark Biddle arrived and they had a conference in the library during which the banker told the detective that the twelve barrels were safe, in a dry place, and that he was giving a little supper that night at home to a few of the big men of the city and he wanted Taine to be there and tell them about the events of the last few days. The San Francisco man protested—said he ought to start for the west—but the banker insisted and said that his guests were not to be disappointed and that he had secured a dress suit for Taine and had sent a long telegram to Mrs. Taine, to the effect that her husband was safe but would be too busy to write for a few days. So Taine went up stairs and had his clothes changed again, and looked very much like a society man when he came down to supper.

Ten men sat down to supper and those men represented the wealth, culture and power of the East. The Mayor was there and several business men, the President of a railroad, the head of a great department store and the private secretary of the Governor of the State. The dinner was well planned and suited Taine, who was still hungry from his long hours of fasting. After it was over and the servants were dismissed and the doors closed, Biddle introduced the little western man and asked him to tell his story, beginning with the Center Internationale episode. Taine talked without flourishes or oratory, just a plain statement of fact told by a plain man. When he finished, he took a small baking powder tin out of his pocket, carefully took the lid off and placed the open can on the table.

"That," he said, "is a small sample of this new poison these men were going to put in your drinking water."

"That looks harmless," said the Mayor." I fancy that it was all a joke. This probably is a novel way Mr. Biddle has of entertaining us after one of his excellent meals."

Mr. Biddle looked at Mr. Taine. Everybody kept still. Then Taine began:

"I HAVE a little money, Mr. Mayor. Of course it is out west but Mr. Biddle will finance me. I bet you one hundred thousand dollars that you will not drink a glass of water with a little pinch of this drug dissolved in it. I will bet you another hundred thousand that if you do drink it, you will turn black inside of twenty-four hours."

His Honor laughed nervously as he replied:

"It would not be very dignified for me to make such bets. You may be telling the truth, yet I am frank to say that I cannot believe you till the thing is demonstrated. It is too fanciful, too much like a fairy tale."

At this the Governor's Secretary interrupted.

"I have an idea. Up at Sing Sing, in the death house, are eleven men waiting death in the electric chair. I believe the Governor would think favorably of pardoning some of them if they would drink some of this drug as an experiment. Suppose we go up to Albany right away and see him? We could take some chemists and specialists with us to tell us what actually happened."

"I do not like that suggestion," said one of the business men. "No matter what happens, the men will be set at liberty and they will talk. A rumor that such a danger threatened New York will be almost as bad for us as though it actually occurred. Now if we could only get some idiots! That is the very idea! Let's go over to Ward's Island to the Hospital for the Insane and see if we cannot get the Superintendent to furnish us with material for the experiment?"

"No! A thousand times NO!!" thundered the Mayor. "Such a thing would leak out—somebody would tell, and a dozen woman's clubs in the city would start to talk about it. To them, those idiots would seem precious. Every woman would say, 'What if they did that to my hopeless child, entrusted to the care of a great city, and unable to defend himself? Suppose my little one, once a baby in my arms, but touched by the finger of God, so that he never grew to be anything but a baby, was turned black to satisfy the curiosity of a group of politicians and capitalists?' Use your imagination and hear the women talking and then at the next election go to the polls prepared to see Tammany Hall wiped out of power. By the Holy Shade of Tweed I would rather drink the damned stuff myself than to give it to a single ward of the State."

At the table was a silent young man. All through the evening he had sat in a gloomy introspection. Mr. Biddle had invited him because he was the junior partner of the most powerful law firm in the city. His right hand, with fingers long and immaculate, lay motionless on the white table cloth. His left hand grasped the stem of a Venetian goblet. During the entire discussion he had turned his face, expressionless, from one speaker to another. Right across the table sat Taine and the little tin can was between them. After the Governor's telegram was read, regretting that he could not be present, but urging them to solve the question once and for all, after the Mayor had foolishly hinted that Taine was telling the tale in the capacity of a commercial and professional entertainer, after seeing Taine's quiet rage and hearing the discussion it provoked, after all this the silent young man stood up.

"Gentlemen," he said. "I am convinced that Mr. Taine is telling the truth as far as he can see it. To believe a thing and to prove it are two different things. I followed his story with a great deal of interest and as far as circumstantial evidence is concerned, he has proved his case. You do not believe him because you do not want to believe him. The whole situation seems impossible, so horrible that you do not dare to face the facts. For thousands of years you have thought that a white skin meant a white God. Tonight you do not even dare to turn some white idiots black.

"Yet, this is a matter of greatest importance to all of you. If this happened, you captains of industry would become paupers, you bankers would degenerate into small town note-shavers, and the politicians of the greatest city in the western hemisphere would start in to work for a living. You need the city to keep you where you are, and you know that it has to be a white city. Mr. Taine was right in feeling that

the danger was as great as any that has ever threatened a people. He had the imagination to see how a thing like that would make New York a pariah among cities of the world.

"So far you are guessing. What you need is proof. Here is the drug and in my hand is a glass of water. Watch me! I take a spoon and put some of the drug in the water and stir it up. No doubt I have made a stronger solution than one to a million, but that is a matter of small importance. When we hold the glass up to the light, we see that it is perfectly clear. I smell it and find it has no odor. To all appearances it is simply a glass of ice water—and now I drink it."

He did so before anyone could stop him: he did it before they even suspected that he was going to do it. The room was quiet, save for a few hissing gasps. He went on talking.

"Of course I have my own reason for doing this, but that is a personal matter. I took an extra large dose of the drug so it would work quickly and relieve your suspense. I will now clear a space in front of my chair on this snow-white table and when I sit down I will spread my hands on the cloth. This will enable you to watch any result without looking at my face. We will pass the time in telling funny stories and jokes."

He sat down and spread out his hands. Then he said:

"Have you ever heard the one about the two Irishmen? I heard that in Dublin and you would be surprised to know who told it to me. I told it once to some cosmopolitans in Monte Carlo and the story was well liked by most of them," and so on and on his talk rambled in an even, cultured, entertaining way and for an hour he talked and perhaps two, and the men listened to him in silence and watched his hands with dread—

Those white hands turned brown and then darker and finally they were black. They saw that the hands were black as any negro's hands had ever been—but no one dared to look the man full in the face—and he said:

"I think I can go now. There seems to be no doubt that Taine told the truth."

The man pushed back his chair, rose to his feet and left the room.

A guest seated near Mr. Biddle started to laugh. The other men looked at him in horror and disgust. He kept on laughing—seemed to be unable to stop—laughed till he cried and panted for breath. The guests looked at Biddle as though they felt it was his place to give the comedian his well deserved rebuke. As he evidently shared in their feeling, Biddle simply waited till he had a chance to speak:

"Smithers! Please stop!! You are the only one who sees anything funny in all this. To me the affair is a tragedy. That man is a hero. He has sacrificed something that is dearer than life for the sake of his city. You should blush for shame at your conduct!"

Smithers gradually became quiet. His lobster red face paled and changed to a deadly pallor, a sickly whiteness, a sweating ashen face, as he replied:

"Oh! I know that you think it is brutal of me and all that, but I could not help it. You could not have helped it either if it had hit you the way it did me. I know the boy. For a year he has been in love with an octoroon, a nice girl and all of that and almost white. She would not marry him because she did not want to spoil his life and he would not live with her unless they were married. That was why he wanted to make the experiment—he thought that if he was colored too, she would marry him. She might have if he were just a little bit colored—just a shade off white like she is, but he turned black—like a piece of coal. I saw his face as he went out and it hit me all of a sudden that she would never recognize him as Jamison, her former white lover. He will never be able to explain it to her, how it happened. She is almost white and do you think she would marry a black man? He was brave and in love and all that sort of thing but fate has played him a sorry jest—I am sorry that I laughed—— but— I—— just—— couldn't —— help it!"

Just then, before Biddle had a chance to reply, the butler handed him a telegram. He opened it and read it and then jumped to his feet:

"Here is something that demands immediate attention from every possible source. We had sent the original twelve barrels containing the poison by truck to Boston. This telegram states that while crossing the Connecticut River at Springfield the steering gear broke and the truck and the twelve barrels broke through the bridge and were sunk in the river. The driver and the other man on the truck jumped out on the bridge and did not get hurt. Meantime the people of every town south of Springfield are exposed to this menace."

"I would advise," said Taine, "that you get in touch with the Governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut at once and have those areas put under martial law. Here is the rest of the drug. Have it examined and see if an antidote for it cannot be found. Do not delay doing this. Use all of your resources and arrest these three men. While they are alive, the country is not safe. Personally I feel that I have done all that I can do for you. The future safety of your city rests with yourselves. There is a midnight train leaving for the west and if you have no objections, I will make a rush and catch it. I want to get west and see how my family is getting along."

"But what do we owe you?" asked the Mayor.

"Oh! You send what you think it is worth to my wife. She gets all I make over and above my salary."

And by I A. M. Taine was speeding westward.

4. *The Insane Avalanche*

A NAMELESS yacht was steaming on an unknown sound towards an uncharted island in the Pacific Ocean. It was the refuge of THE POWERFUL ONES, a place specially prepared as a haven of escape when the world was being combed for them and the police of every nation was hunting them like so many cobras or tigers.

There were now only three left. George, known to European society as Count Sebastian, the man called Marcus, an inventor and scientist of unknown antecedents and Dr. Semon, who had been educated at the best medical schools and universities in Europe. There had been others, but they had died in the disaster resulting from the destruction of the Center Internationale. The one woman in the organization was, for the time being, hiding in San Francisco. There were

subordinates in the association, and perhaps thirty in all, were either on the yacht or were waiting on the island for its arrival.

They were all negroes, banded together for the total subjection, and, if necessary, destruction of the Caucasian race. Three carefully arranged and minutely prepared plans had failed. The effort to buy New York and turn the black race white had terminated in the destruction of their building in New York, the death of over a thousand of their most valuable members and a serious economic loss. Their plan to impoverish the United States by flooding its banks with millions of synthetic gold and then forcing the world to change from a gold to a platinum standard had resulted in failure, and every nation in the world had been furnished with a method of detecting their artificial gold. No longer could they create millions in their laboratories over night. Then had come their determination to inflict a crowning and humiliating injury on their enemies by turning eight million white New Yorkers black overnight. That also had been a costly and useless effort. They had spent their resources in preparing nearly three thousand pounds of a powerful drug, and had used it in an effort to poison the water supply of the great city, yet, for a week after they had done this, they waited impatiently for the drug to act and nothing had happened. Discouraged, they realized that once more, in some mysterious way, they had been thwarted in their revenge.

They had failed, and for the first time they were pursued. On land, air and ocean the machinery of justice was following them in a determined search which they knew would stop only when they were safely behind the steel bars of some modern bastile. Then it was that they were glad they had an island to go to, prepared years before for just such an emergency, and equally glad they were to be able to get there—and they lost no time.

On the island, discouraged and disheartened, they lived from day to day, without hope and with diminishing pride in their own achievements. The elaborate system of government, which had been relentless and immobile in its rigid rule, began to disintegrate and decay. They, who had once been called THE POWERFUL ONES, slowly approached the level of their humblest subjects. The tropical heat lowered their morale and slowly destroyed their desire to conquer the world. Gradually the equatorial sun was restoring them to equality with their savage ancestors. Women were brought to the island, at first secretly and then openly. When Ebony Kate arrived, the tom-tom was heard once more. A sailor, breaking the laws of the island, was beheaded, and his body found other sepulchre than Mother Earth. Those who had hoped to conquer the United States were now being subjected by their own impulses.

Of course they still tried to invent new plans for the continuation of the struggle to which they had consecrated their lives, but it seemed to become harder to concentrate. The minds of Count Sebastian, Marcus and Dr. Semon had once held a large proportion of the knowledge of modern civilization, and no doubt they still knew all they ever did know, but it became harder to use their intelligence and knowledge in productive effort. Each day nothing happened. Each day they promised each other that tomorrow they would begin intensive work.

THEN one day a stranger came to the island. He was a mulatto, well dressed, with several trunks of clothes, books and scientific instruments. It never was determined how he had found out about their refuge, and the exact location, but there was no doubt that he knew considerable about their organization.

There was no hesitation on his part in telling his reason for seeking them over thousands of miles of tropical ocean. His motive was the same as theirs before discouragement had anaesthetized their ambition.

"I am a physician by profession," he told the three leaders that evening," but my specialty is psychiatry. I have always been interested in the mind, and preferably in the abnormal, the unusual, the diseased mind. My color made it hard for me. The study of medicine was difficult, and the endeavor to become a psychiatrist almost insurmountable. There is only one place to study insanity and that is in a hospital for the mentally diseased. In Europe it was easy to obtain opportunities for study but hard to finance the years of preparation. In the United States there was practically no opening for one of my race. Again and again I took civil service examinations and was placed at the head of eligible lists, only to be sidetracked when they found I was a negro. I knew as much as any of them. In fact, for two years I wrote a series of papers for one of the great physicians of America who published them under his own name. Finally I drifted to Harlem and opened a small hospital for mental diseases, and there I heard about you and your ambitions. They are still talking about you, in a whisper, in the secret halls of their lodges. They believe that some day you will come back and strike for them—destroy the Caucasian and establish the supremacy of the Ethiopic race.

"I gathered together the fragments of what I heard and from them I made a fairly good story of your plans and your failures. After the day's work was done, I used to sit in my office and wonder why you had failed and whether in some way you could not yet succeed. You will pardon me if I tell you that I gained the idea that the cause of your failure was your desire to gain your ends too quickly. You wanted to accomplish all in a year, in five years, instead of being willing to wait.

"One night I had an idea. A man can preach a sermon, write a book or live a life centering around a single new thought. Perhaps dozens of our specialty had entertained this idea for a second and then passed it by before it reached their consciousness. With me it was different. I was so thoroughly conscious of it, that for several nights I could not sleep. Finally I arrived at a decision. I spent a year in study and expended all of my wealth, not much, but all of it, and finally I was sure. Then I came to you. We need money, time and brains, but above all we shall need patience. Some of us may die of old age before we are through, but we will have trained men to follow us in the next generation, and the next.

"Now what I want to do is this———"

Far into the night he talked and long into the dark they listened, and they were tired by morning, but in their hearts was a new determination and a fresh courage. They had failed three times, but this time they were sure they would succeed, for, to the leadership of Count Sebastian, the inventiveness of Marcus, and the scientific ability of Dr. Semon, was added the deeply specialized mind of Dr. Abraham Flandings.

LIFE in the United States was becoming highly standardized. Many of the processes in the industrial life were so successfully studied that production was possible on a larger scale than had ever been dreamed of. A working slave would spend a lifetime carving and decorating a Roman chariot in the days

On their tags were written their final destination and they were taken, sleeping, to their new homes and laid in long rows in glass houses.

of Nero, but in the era of Ford, four hundred men in four minutes could assemble an automobile and more than one of them had wealth enough to purchase and use it. Life was standardized as well as work. In the United States millions were becoming used to the same diet, the same amusements and the same vices. The home was disappearing. Babies were born in hospitals, reared in day nurseries, educated in state schools, amused by the cinema, entertained by the automobile and airplane. The companionate marriage provided a maximum of selfish, personal pleasure with a minimum of responsibility and self-sacrifice. In thousands of such families the wife was a wage earner as well as the husband and the pair ate out of tin cans and delicatessen stores. Sickness was financed by industrial insurance and domiciled in hospitals. The diagnosis was made piecemeal by groups of specialists, the disease was treated, thousands of drugs were in laboratories, and each patient had the attention of one-tenth of a nurse. No serious case was considered complete without a careful autopsy, the report of which was given to the surviving relatives to be considered as a basis for future reference. The remains, less the sections for microscopic study, were buried from undertaker's parlors and finally rested in enormous community graves and recorded in the large volumes of cemetery records, many thousand burials to the volume.

Life was easy. As the life of the world became systematized, competition grew less severe and the existence of the individual less complex. He had to think less because so many of the necessary things of life were thought of for him. In school his children had their teeth filled and tonsils and adenoids removed. An adults' health insurance forced him to eat more or less. When food could be bought in tablets, less skill was required to become a cook. It is not certain that the people were happier but they were certainly far more comfortable.

One of the most remarkable changes was the great increase in the amount of glass used. Like all other industries, the manufacture of glass was controlled by a trust, which for inventiveness and initiative had no equal in the business world of the western hemisphere. Their motto was:

"Use More Glass in More Ways."

Their advise was:

"Let Us Show You What To Do With Glass."

Their full page slogan in the papers of the United States read:

"You Can Do Anything With Glass and Do It Cheaper."

It seemed, from their literature, that this was to be a glass age instead of steel. Their inventors made glass that was flexible, malleable and ductile, as strong as steel, pliable as copper, and useful as wood. Roads were made of glass bricks: it was used for roofs instead of slate or asbestos, and finally a complete house was put on the market, a house of glass, 100 per cent glass, six rooms complete, for $100.00.

It was a pretty house. The walls were of green glass, eight inches thick and filled with bubbles. It was, of course, supposed to be an excellent nonconductor of heat. The roof was of brown glass, thin enough to allow a soft light to filter through in the daytime, yet not transparent to the aviator passing above. Inside the furniture, plumbing, fixtures, were all of glass, different in tone and harmonious in design. All that was necessary was to rent or buy a piece of land,

order the house and in a few weeks move in. The cellar was a combination basement and garage.

Naturally, when a house could be bought for the price of four supercord tires, the desire came to many companionate brides to own their own homes. Suburban cities of glass sprang up like mushrooms over night. People who had never considered it advisable to buy a home, gasoline being so high and so necessary, now stayed home on four consecutive Sundays, and on the fifth Sunday moved into their own home.

In the cities, the older tenaments and apartment houses were falling into decay. The real estate men, architects and builders realized that steel would rust and cement crumble and decay. The Glass Trust, at the psychological moment, proposed apartment houses built of glass, and when the possibility of this type of construction was doubted, they put up a twenty-story building in the middle of New York City and asked the experts to find flaws in it. The Trust claimed that such a building could be erected, of standardized parts, in one-third the time and for one-half the cost of a similar building of reinforced concrete.

Within five years all the new construction in the great cities was of glass. The more substantial structures of stone were doubled in size by adding glass super-stories. Finally, as a gift to the city, the Glass Trust built a transborough driveway fifty feet wide on the tops of houses, thus greatly facilitating inter-urban traffic.

Not only in New York, but in all of the large American cities, this use of glass was progressively increasing. The rural districts, quick to see the many benefits arising from such a cheap, yet durable, material, adopted it even more extensively than did the cities. Accustomed to ordering merchandise by mail, they readily bought the new glass sections, and as quickly put them together. The farmer was now living in a glass house that was easily cleaned, vermin proof and cheaper than any other kind of material or mode of construction. In the South, the glass house was replacing the hut of the plantation hand and of the poor white.

Inside of twenty-five years, ninety per cent of the population of the United States was spending at least half their life under glass. For the last ten of these years, the Glass Trust had ceased to invent new uses for their products and devoted all their energy toward selling large amounts at a low price and a small profit. While not claiming to be philanthropists, they at least felt that their firm had contributed largely to the economic welfare and happiness of the nation. At least they said so very modestly in their advertisements.

The ruling minds of the United States were rather well pleased with the progress the nation was making. They felt that they had each contributed their share toward the prosperity, health and happiness of the great republic. It is true that the wealth of the land was concentrated in the hands of a few large trusts, but these used their power to aid and not to oppress. Education, investigation, and prophylaxis were instruments used by them on a large scale. Every rich man gave millions toward the endowment of a Foundation. Carnegie gave every little town a library, while Rockefeller freed the country from the dreaded hook-worm. There were two great desires of every bright mind in the States, to become rich, and to use that wealth in a new service to humanity. Yet even the humanitarian work was so systematized as to become painfully impersonal. The individual was beginning to disappear, and to reappear simply as a cog in a great machine.

Then, right in the midst of this happiness, came disaster.

It came so insidiously, so quietly, so naturally and universally that for many years it was not recognized as a threatening danger and a destructive agent of gloomy horror.

EARLY in the history of the country, asylums had been erected for the care of the insane. At first these were simply boarding houses which gave custodial care to the inmates, clothed, fed and bedded them. In 1900 the ability to diagnose was being developed in these hospitals. Ten years later active treatment was begun for some types. By the time of the World's War, the specialty of Neuro-psychiatry was growing more rapidly than any other branch of medical science. Institutions for the insane were no longer called Asylums, but State Hospitals for Mental Diseases. The physicians were no longer called Head-knockers, but Psychiatrists. The insane were considered wards of the state and each commonwealth vied with the others in properly caring for these unfortunate people.

With the founding of the National Committee of Mental Hygiene, came the statistical study of insanity. At once certain interesting facts were disclosed. For example, it was found that as many people became insane every year in the United States as graduated from the Universities, Colleges and Normal Schools. That fact alone gave some people food for thought. Then from all over the United States came the complaint that the states could not build additional hospitals fast enough to accommodate the increasing demand. The yearly program of the American Psychological Society was occupied with the problem of prevention of new cases of insanity in the years to come and a proper care of those who were already insane. Many investigators spent years in trying to cure these cases but many more were working in the field of prevention. Bills providing for the sterilization of the unfit were passed in many states. More rigid laws were passed regulating marriage. The increase in insanity became like the weather, there was a lot of talk about it, but not much could be done to correct it.

In 1920 some states were caring for one insane person to every three hundred of its population. By 1930 the ratio all over the country was one in two hundred. At that time the burden seemed too great to be carried indefinitely, but with newer methods of feeding and increasing efficiency, every state was able to go ahead with the great charity. When five more years had passed, the situation ceased to be a problem and became a menace, a threatening disaster, for the ratio was now one in fifty.

Not a family but had at least one member insane. In some cases every individual, not only of a family, but of a community had become insane. Unable to care for themselves, lacking even the elementary instincts of self-preservation, these people had to be segregated and gathered together into large settlements and fed, clothed, bedded, and treated by the State. Yet, in spite of the tremendous burden, the country staggered on, in the hope that the wave of insanity would pass by and that the complete isolation of these mentally afflicted would absolutely prevent the transmission of the disease in future generations.

There was now no effort made to build new institutions for these people. Instead large towns were confiscated, walled around with high wire fences and turned into concentration camps. Normal Schools, Colleges, Churches and High Schools were turned into hospitals for specific types of psychoses. It required the combined effort of the same people to provide for

the insane. Fortunately science had made it possible to care for these in the most efficient manner. Whereas, a ward physician formerly had a maximum of three hundred patients, he was now caring for three thousand.

By the next three years, to be exact, in 1923, the problem had become a national one, because one-half of the population were incapacitated, on account of their mental peculiarities. The United States army, regular and reserves, had been mobilized to its full strength and was used as guards, nurses and attendants. In some parts of the nation, public work and farming was done with various degrees of success by the stronger of the male patients, while the less afflicted females helped with the cooking and washing.

The leaders of the American Psychiatric Society watched the progress of this tidal wave with the greatest interest and intensive study, but finally had to make the soul-sickening report to Congress that they did not understand what was causing the great insanity epidemic, and consequently did not have the slightest idea of how they could prevent it. They stated that the insanity had little effect on the death incident and that if these people were humanely treated, the average length of institution life would be about twenty years. They knew, though it was only admitted behind closed doors and in a whisper, that if the increase continued for another ten years, the entire nation would be mad with no one to care for them. A continent of insanity left without control to follow the tortuous devices of their dementia! Perhaps it would spread and the entire world would go wild!!

The world feared this and enforced a rigid quarantine. The United States, weakened in man power and barely able to finance the crushing burden, was too feeble to protest.

Something had to be done!

THERE arose in Congress a party who demanded the life in a humane manner, of every person who became insane, and who were already insane. They argued, and it must be confessed that they had a great deal of right on their side, that the time would come when these victims of insanity would have to die from hunger. It was still possible to make protein using atmospheric nitrogen, to change cellulose into sugar, to make synthetic fat, but the time might come when the laboratory worker would go crazy in his shop, the skilled mechanic become insane at his bench, the engineer hauling a train of food develop a psychosis at the throttle. Would it not be better to kill them humanely, rather than to wait for the time when, lacking the restraining influences of sanity, they would rend each other like beasts and die in the swamps and mountains of hunger and cold? With the insane burden off their shoulders, the sane population of the United States might yet restore it to its former place as a leader in the world. Now they had nothing to look forward to—— but—— the—— end!!!

This party was bitterly opposed by another faction of Congress. They argued that even though the entire nation went insane, even if their civilization perished under the growing curse, still as long as a million, a hundred thousand, a hundred or one person remained sane, it was the duty of that survivor of sanity to continue caring for his unfortunate brothers. It was better for the nation to perish clean than to survive with an ineffaceable blot upon its manhood and honor. It was not their fault that the entire country was sick, but if in their panic they put one of these unfortunates to death, then forever their names would go down in disgrace on the pages of history. From press and pulpit, from Senator to the Mayor of the smallest town came the cry echoing that command given centuries before on Mount Sinai:

THOU SHALL NOT KILL!

Yet what was to be done?

All through 1938 they talked and thought and prayed and in January, 1939, the dreaded news came. The increase during the year had been so great, that now there were two insane persons in the United States for every sane person! Small wonder that the Senators pleaded for the Psychiatric Death Bill.

It would have passed the next session of Congress had not an humble worker in an obscure college of the south, by name Howens of Spineville, made a special trip to Washington at his own expense and asked, with a peculiar diffidence, the privilege of appearing before the Committee on Insanity. They had been bothered with all kinds of cranks but this man was well provided with credentials and they gave him a hearing.

They met in one of the Senate rooms around a long table. Professor Howens asked to be seated near the middle of the table so all could see and hear him. On the table in front of him he placed a small Boston bag. Just as soon as he started to talk, they identified him as a college professor, for every few minutes he would stop and ask them if they understood the matter as far as he had gone. In fact, he began by saying that he was very much embarrassed, but if he could just imagine they were a group of his pupils, he would do very well in his talk.

"I have been working on this for some years," he said, "and before I go on I want to give due credit to three of my pupils who have been of the greatest help to me for many years. Of course our college, like all others, was turned into a hospital, but the laboratory smelled so that it never could be fixed up as a dormitory and we just kept on using it. I and my three pupils thought we might as well stay there as anywhere else, and we really were fairly comfortable on army cots, eating synthetic food and once in a while one of our turtles. Of course I wanted to stay but I never could make up my mind why the other three decided to spend so many years with me; so, you must understand that each of us contributed a part to the conclusions we reached.

"Hardner Gowers had been raised in the country and had learned to use his eyes in the woods. The woman, Ellen Heller, was really insane, her peculiar idea being that she could make paraffin sections better than anyone in the world, which of course was a delusion, because I taught her all she knew. Still, she was a very fine technician and was of great help to us and as we all thought a great deal of her, especially Gowers, we did not report her to the authorities; we simply let her stay with us. The third student had spent his four college years with the other two and had developed the habit. Therefore, though he tried to leave us, he was so miserable when away, that he came back and offered his services. Miss Heller used to say, 'Cline does not do a thing to help me but I cannot work unless he is watching me,' so Cline would sit on a stool and look at her work, and we got along very well. We were not bothered much by the authorities. They tried to investigate us once but could not stand the odor of our work shop.

"Gowers brought in a wasp's or mud mason's nest one day and we thought it would be interesting to study it in detail. Perhaps some of you gentlemen have seen them in your boyhood. The female builds it,

a cell at a time. She fills each cell with small insects like spiders and flies and even small caterpillars. Then she lays one egg on the tops of these unfortunate victims of war. Sealing this cell, she builds another cell on top of it. After a period of incubation the egg hatches and the little worm finds itself on top of a pile of nice food, alive and fresh. By the time it eats all of this food it has grown large enough to fill the cell with its body and eventually, after a metamorphosis, breaks through the wall and flies out, a wasp."

AT this point he opened his bag and placed several objects on the table.

"I wanted to make all this very clear to you so I brought some real nests and also a large cement model of one. If you study this carefully, you will be able to see just what happens. Is there anything I have said so far that is not plain? Very well, then I will go on.

"When the female wasp prepares to fill a cell with food for her future offspring she flies around till she finds a fly or spider and after pouncing on it, she stings it in the back of the neck, injecting into the nervous system a minute drop of a poison that does not kill but which suspends animation and renders the victim unable to move. Life continues, but so slowly that to the average observer it seems that the insect is dead.

"We had done about all we could do in the way of research, so we decided to study the habits of this wasp, and see if we could identify and isolate the substance used in producing the paralysis of her victims. We did not have any trouble in securing lots of material, but the wasps were so small and the poison sack so tiny that it was almost impossible to secure any of the poison. Then Cline woke up one day over his stool and proposed that we make the wasps larger. That woke us all up. We built several hundred large wire cages, prepared a new card index and started to breed bigger and better wasps. It was all a matter of selection, first with wasps, then by cross breeding with dragon flies and by feeding the later generations with thyroid and irradiating them with radium, we finally produced a species as large as a pigeon, with poison sacks like walnuts. It gave us a thrill when one of these came sailing in one day with a large toad to put in a cell. The eggs were like robin eggs. We had to be careful at first because they were real savage.

"So we had all the poison we needed for our experiments. We had a fair idea of what it would do to a bird or an animal, but it was not till one accidentally stung Cline that we realized the great importance of it all. Cline was sitting on a stool looking at Miss Heller and he didn't realize that he was stung any more than we did. The rest of us kept on working till dark and then started in to dissolve our synthetic tablets for supper and Cline just sat there looking at where Miss Heller used to be but wasn't. Gowers was not usually jealous, but he thought this was going too far and he went over and told him so and then we found that he was asleep. He stayed that way for a month, during which time we kept a careful record of his temperature, pulse and respiration. When he awoke, we could not see that he was much worse for the accident.

"That gave us an idea. We tried it on rabbits. I brought one with me that has been asleep a year. We started all over again to see just what there was in the poison that produced such an effect on the nervous system. We finally tried to duplicate it in the test tubes and after hundreds of failures, we succeeded in making a preparation that was absolutely similar in action to the insect's poison. It was easy then to purify it, put it into smaller bulk, standardize the dose. Now we are able to show you, in this hypodermic syringe, five drops of a liquid drug which, when injected into a human being of 150 pounds, will produce a deep coma lasting approximately one year.

"From our experiments we feel that we are able to say that during the period of this sleep a person so treated will lie motionless. There will be practically a total absence of all bodily activity. He will require neither food nor drink. Extreme of temperature will have no effect on his body. We have frozen rabbits in cold storage, let them thaw, and when they recover consciousness, they seem none the worse for the freezing. Of course they cannot be heated to a very high temperature. There seems to be a slight loss of weight due to evaporation, but we have provided for this by the injection of a small amount of sterile saline water, about one pint every year. I hope that you have understood all this as far as I have gone.

"We had done considerable work on the subject before we fully realized just what could be done with the discovery. I believe it was Mr. Gowers who first called my attention to the matter. He had been reading of the conflict in Congress between those who wanted the insane killed and those who were opposed to such a radical procedure. It seemed to him that we had a compromise to offer that might be acceptable to both parties. Our method would not kill the patient, but at the same time it would place him in such a state that his care would be reduced to a minimum. Just as soon as we started to talk about it, Miss Heller had a thousand suggestions to make and we have most of them incorporated in a thousand page report, but just now I will content myself by saying that we have figured that the large cities like New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Detroit, New Orleans, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles, have ample room space for all the insane that need segregation and treatment. They do not have to be put on beds and they can be placed side by side in the rooms of the glass houses. These, as we know, are vermin- and rat-proof. Once a year the medical department of the Army can arrange to give each one a hypodermic of the drug, diluted with a pint of normal saline solution. Just as soon as the fifty, eighty or one hundred million people are thus cared for, the energy of the sane, released from the terrific burden, can be directed toward the rehabilitation of the nation. A Board of Inquiry can serve in every state, and as soon as a case of insanity is found to be hopeless, it can be given a treatment and placed with the others.

"Cline has been working on some statistics and some of his conclusions have been very interesting. There are two facts that we want to call your attention to. In our state there are some people who live in wooden houses. The windows are simply openings closed at night with wooden shutters. None of the people living in such circumstances, as far as we have been able to find out, have become insane. The other fact is that we have made a Simon-Binet examination of over a thousand of our sane citizens and found out that what we suspected was the truth; they were all very superior adults as far as the intelligence tests were concerned and they stayed sane no matter what kind of houses they lived in. As a matter of fact, practically all we examined lived in glass houses. We thought that all this might be more than a coincidence and wanted to advise you to have similar studies made all over the United States. There may be something in glass houses that makes people become insane if they are not superior adults to begin with.

"We want to help all we can. I do not know that we can do much more than we have done, but if you want us to come to Washington and work here, we will do it. You will find Gowers and Miss Heller most valuable and even Cline says something every month or so that is of great importance. Now if any of you have questions to ask, I shall be glad to explain any of the details. This rabbit is one of our experimental animals, and I can put a cow in the same condition if you wish me to."

NATURALLY this long statement of Professor Howen's caused the greatest excitement. There followed long interviews with the leading scientists of the country. Experiments were made and remade. Committees were appointed. The three co-workers of the Professor were sent for and their separate stories obtained. While there was some attempt at keeping the details of the new idea a secret, still it was not long before every person of intelligence in the United States was talking about the plan proposed by the Professor. The central committees sent for scientists from every state, and when these men came to Washington and talked to the four experimenters from the South, it did not take long for them to be converted. The calm knowledge of the Professor, the scientific ability of Gowers, the superior attainments of Miss Heller and the profound silence of Cline, who simply sat day after day without even thinking, impressed all the investigators.

After some months, the various committees reported. There was nothing new in the glass that had been used in the United States for the last twenty years. It was just like the glass that had always been used. There was practically no difference except in the quantities that were used. The scientists finally came to the conclusion that there was, in the sun's rays, some healthful property that was absolutely necessary to the mental health of the human race. When men started to live most of their lives with glass between them and the sun, these rays were blocked, and absorbed by the glass in such amounts, that men became insane for the want of them. Pediatricians told of the healthful effect of sunlight in rickets, which effect was absolutely absent when the sunlight was filtered through window glass. The Senate called upon the Glass Trust to see if by their help a kind of mental health glass could not be made, but it was discovered that the Glass Trust had gone out of business. This was not surprising as in many of the countries industries had stopped, partly from a lack of labor, partly because there had been no expansion of business.

The conclusions of Professor Howens and his three co-workers were substantiated by examinations all over the country. Where people lived an outdoor life with a total absence of glass, there was practically no insanity. Where they lived under glass, all but the superior adults became insane. The work was carried on as rapidly as possible, but when the final reports were ready for consideration by Congress, there were four insane to every sane person in the country.

They accepted the recommendation of the investigating committees. In fact, there was nothing else to do. The Sleeping Bill was passed and signed by the President in one week. Within another week Professor Howens was in charge of the chemical resources of the nation. With the help of Gowers and Miss Heller he soon started production of the sleeping drug on a large scale. Even Cline woke up for a few months and organized and initiated a huge card index which was to record every insane person in the country.

Work was rushed in every department of the undertaking. The army and navy and public health service were called in for co-operation. Finally everything was ready for the transportation of the insane to the new centers, the sleeping cities, where they were to enter into their long rest. The day this work was started it was estimated that there were one hundred and ten million insane and one million sane people in the States. Systematically they were brought to the great cities, indexed, tagged, and given their dose of sleep-drug. On their tag was written their final destination and they were taken, sleeping, to their new homes and laid in long rows in the glass houses.

The work continued.

There was no rest, no respite, no vacation.

The order had gone forth that the work would stop when it was completed.

Gradually it was accomplished, and the exhausted workers laid down their pens, card indexes, and hypodermic needles.

One hundred and ten million people were resting quietly free from worry and the need for food. They needed no nursing or care of any kind. Nothing more would have to be done for one year, when each of them would have to be given another dose. The primary dose had been so graduated that every sleeper would need his second dose on January first of the next year. It was believed that sufficient workers could be trained in the interval so the hundred and ten million doses could be given in one day.

The sane nation relaxed, but only for a short time. There was work to be done, far more than even a million superior adults could hope to accomplish. New homes must be provided. The children of the insane, deprived of their parents, must be cared for and reared to healthy adult life. An entirely different system of economics was necessary to promote the healthy industrial growth of the nation.

Meantime the world looked on, waiting to see if the late giant in the league of nations would die or survive. A few nations offered their sympathetic help, but as a rule the world looked on in apathy and indifference.

The million superior adults rose to the emergency and were equal to it. They showed mankind, once and for all, that a superior adult is worth ten ordinary adults, a hundred inferior adults, a thousand morons, a million imbeciles. No longer held down by the necessity of caring for the inferiors of the nation, the million real men and women worked wonders in a few years. Machinery, electricity, the atom were used as never before. Mankind no longer depended on its muscle but on its mind. In the United States a race of SUPERMEN was developing.

Every year, on the first of January an army of workers invaded the cities of the peaceful sleepers and gave them their annual dose of somnifacient medicine. Then for the rest of the year they were forgotten, save by the watchmen who made their silent rounds. Free from damp and vermin, undisturbed by any sound, the sleepers slept.

Occasionally new cases of insanity developed even among the superior adults, but the Nation had learned the lesson and such cases were put to sleep at once. The prisons also were closed. It was as easy to give the drug to a criminal as it was to give it to a case of insanity. It is interesting to note at this point that crime rapidly diminished to the vanishing point. The hardened breaker of law, undeterred by the death penalty, was horror stricken at the idea of centuries of suspended animation. The criminal code became more

and more simple, until finally it was reduced to a single sentence:

Those who are harmful to the public welfare must sleep.

Five years passed and then ten.

The sleeping treatment of insanity had saved the nation which was once again becoming great.

Professor Howens, rewarded with the highest honors a nation could bestow, was working intermittently in his Washington home, endeavoring to find some practical use for the cockroach. His three assistants, financially independent for life, were touring the world, fully determined to marry each other if they could only agree on the details. Cline declared that he could not live without looking at Miss Heller a certain number of hours a day, and Gowers emphatically said that under no circumstances would he marry a woman who kept another man alive in such a ridiculous manner. The woman in question told them both that she would never marry any man, unless he could excell her in making a paraffin section. The outcome of this triple argument was that the three of them lived together as happily as most people do.

ON a desert island in the Pacific ocean four men and a woman, all nearing seventy, were engaged in an active discussion. The years had touched them lightly and they looked much younger than they really were. That is, all except the woman. She was black and looked old.

They were listening with interest to the report made by the youngest of the party, the neuro-psychiatrist, Dr. Flandings.

"It was an interesting trip," he said. "You cannot understand how close we came to succeeding in our attempt to kill a nation, unless you travel through it as it is today. Approximately a million and a quarter people are living in a country, that a few years ago supported nearly a hundred times that population. They are living comfortably, mainly in little country towns. The degree of education they possess has never been equaled in the history of the world. They have their university education for every young person. Culture and refinement are free. There seems to be a very slight difference between the rich and the poor. In fact, it is hard to tell just who the rich are and who the poor.

"Thanks to my wonderful letters of introduction I was permitted to visit one of their sleeping cities. New York has fifteen million sleepers where formerly ten million go-getters ruled the world. The streets are clean and silent. In the office buildings these people lie in serried rows. Each is tagged and card indexed. Once a year they receive a fresh dose of the quieting drug. Their hearts may beat, they may breathe, the blood may flow through their vascular systems, but these things can only be detected by instruments of the greatest precision. All that can be said of them is that they are not dead.

"When I told you, years ago, that insanity would increase in a country in proportion to the amount of glass used, I was stating a hypothesis that turned out to be axiomatically true. All we did was to invent new processes whereby glass could be made very cheaply and educate the Glass Trust in new methods of advertising. The plan seemed fool proof. All we had to do was to sit and wait for the nation to go insane. It nearly did. In fact, I believe that every person in the United States who could become insane did so. Even the sane ones would have tottered and fallen under the burden had it not been for the process invented by that Southern Professor. You remember that we considered the possibility of the fact that the sane ones might kill the insane ones to be rid of them, but none of us ever conceived of their solving the problem in the way they did solve it.

"Just what did we accomplish?

"We took a nation which contained every possible form of degeneracy, feeble-mindedness, criminality and potential insanity and we purified it. We were the direct cause of their being able to produce a race of superior adults. Not only that, but we were the indirect cause of their being able to keep it so. Now, every criminal, every psychiatric case, even every person who contracts syphilis is at once put to sleep. They have a country free from crime, social diseases and nervousness. It did not take long for the mentally twisted of the world to learn to stay out of a country like that. The rest of the world is degenerating as fast as it can, but in the United States every force is one of uplift, and righteousness.

"And we did it. We wanted to have our revenge and we did it.

"And because of what we did, it is a better, bigger country today than it ever was."

"But what really became of our race?" asked George, who had once been called Count Sebastian.

"That was one of the interesting things they did. Every negro was examined. If he proved to be feeble-minded or diseased in any way, they put him to sleep. Those who were healthy were each given a thousand dollars and sent over to Liberia. At the present time there is not one negro in the States except those who are sleeping."

"I suppose they have them segregated, by themselves?" asked Marcus.

"Yes, I believe so."

"We are just where we were when we started!" exclaimed Dr. Semon.

The old woman, Ebony Kate, laughed:

"No! We are worse off than when we started. We have tried four times and four times we have failed."

"Tell me this, Dr. Flandings," asked George. "Did you find anyone who blamed us, THE POWERFUL ONES, for what happened?"

"As far as I was able to find out," was the answer, "no one ever connected us with the wave of insanity. I even talked with some of the men who had been at the head of the Glass Trust and they were equally in the dark as to the part we had played."

Then George smiled, a bitter, crooked smile, as he whispered:

"If they have forgotten us, then we are all ready for the final blow. You three men, Marcus, Semon and Flandings go there, and by the sheer force of your intellect, secure positions in their central laboratories. It will be an easy thing for you to advance to positions of trust. Work on till you have charge of the making of this sleeping drug. Then find a powerful exciting drug to take its place, something that will make a maniac out of a marble statue. Arrange matters so that on the first of January each one of the sleepers will be given a dose of this mania-producing drug instead of the sleep medicine. Imagine the results! What can a million persons, no matter how intelligent, do in conflict with a hundred and ten million wild maniacs? Before they have time to realize what has happened, they will be torn to pieces and the country will be a desolate waste inhabited by millions of hungry, crazed fools and criminals. We will fly over the country in an aeroplane and watch it die! It will be our crowning triumph."

The three listeners ran over and hugged him in their joy.

"No one but you, George, would have thought of it!" exclaimed Marcus.

The old dame removed her pipe:

"Don't do it, boys!" she advised. "We have been defeated every time and by such a narrow margin that it makes me believe there is a God after all. We are all rich enough to live comfortably for the rest of our lives. They have forgotten us. Let them alone and let us live in peace. No good will come of it."

The four men looked at her in pity, as Dr. Semon said:

"Poor Ebony Kate is certainly growing senile."

That worried the colored woman. She had failed to gain an education in her youth and though she had associated with these men all her life, still they had an unpleasant habit of using words she did not understand. What did it mean for a person to grow senile? There was no one to ask on the island; the servants were all illiterate. Anyway she could remember the word.

At the last moment, Count Sebastian decided to make the trip to the United States with the other three men. They left secretly and silently one night and when Ebony Kate awoke they were gone, and she was alone on the island with a dozen servants. That did not worry her as she was so greatly feared, that her life was an easy one. What bothered her was the word senile.

A YEAR passed and then another and yet a third. It was the first week of December when a steamer came near the island. The black woman at once recognized it as a strange ship. In the history of the island, this was the first time such a thing had happened. Shrugging her shoulders, she pretended indifference, gave a few rapid orders to the servants and walked down to the beach. Through the quiet waters of the lagoon a row boat was slowly approaching the shore. There were several men dressed in uniform, and one little old man in tropical linens.

The officers remained with the sailors but the little old man started to walk up the beach toward the black woman. They peered at each other. Suddenly the man said:

"I believe you are Ebony Kate?"

"I sure am—— and are youse Master Taine?"

"Yes. That is my name. Well, Kate, we are some older than we were the last time we met. A good deal of water has gone over the mill dam since then. I never did think I would find you, but here you are. Can you take care of my friends and myself for a day or so? We shall want some fresh water and some fruit."

They walked back to the boat and Kate was introduced to the officers as Madam Octavia, formerly of Indo-China. Then they all went to the main bungalow. Taine and the officers all kept one hand in a pocket on a gun, but their caution was unnecessary. Taine, however, was uneasy.

"Where are your friends, Madam?"

"They are gone."

"I trust they are not dead."

"Ah! No. Not dead, Sir, but just away."

It was interesting to note that she was now talking in the best of English. Taine looked at her, wondering just what she really meant.

"So they are away? How well I remember the old times. There were Count Sebastian and Marcus and the clever physician, Dr. Semon. We were young then, Madam. I was living in San Francisco and every once in a while your friends made it necessary for me to travel. Life is different now in the United States. You would not recognize it. The changes in the last thirty years have been wonderful."

"And your wife and children, are they well?"

"They were the last time I saw them. That was a year ago. We have been cruising in the Pacific—— for my health. I was beginning to grow old, Madam, and my wife insisted that I consult a Doctor, and he said that there was nothing wrong with me except that I had lost interest in life. He said that when a man had solved all of his problems and solved all his difficulties, he grew old. Then he said that what I needed was some excitement and advised me to go back on the Secret Service. I talked it over with Mrs. Taine and she suggested that I finish up my work of some thirty years ago and arrest or kill THE POWERFUL ONES. Her idea was that so long as they were alive, nobody in the United States would be really safe, and just because we had not heard from them for so long, was no sign that they were dead or harmless.

"I thought there was something in what she said, so I went to Washington. Almost everybody that I knew there was dead. As far as New York City was concerned, that was just a place where millions of sleepers were resting. The new city was upon the Hudson. I went there but all of my former friends were gone, a few were insane and the rest dead. So I thought it all over and decided to see the President of the United States. I told him the history of THE POWERFUL ONES from the very beginning and ended by accusing them of the wave of insanity that had so nearly destroyed the nation. We had a hard time finding all the old documents but I finally proved every part of my story. Then I asked him for help in locating those men, provided they were still alive, and I guessed that they would be somewhere in the Pacific. He believed me enough to finance the search and I have been scouring the ocean for an unknown island. I heard rumors of such a place ruled over by an old-fashioned Princess and here you are and here I am."

"And the rest are not here," said Ebony Kate.

That was all she would say. The next day she was equally non-committal. Taine had an idea that the men he was hunting were hiding on the island, but to find them seemed rather hopeless. Meantime the steamer was supplied with water and fruit and a dozen live pigs.

On the third night, after supper, Taine announced his intention of remaining ashore instead of returning to the ship with the officers. The night was calm. Ebony Kate sat on the gallery fanning herself. Taine sat watching her. Suddenly she stopped rocking and said:

"Mr. Taine, what is senile? If you say that a person is growing senile, what do you mean?"

"It means that you are growing old, the skin wrinkles, the hair becomes white, your teeth fall out, your memory becomes poor. You become a withered, silly old hag."

"Would you call me senile?"

"No, indeed! You do not look a day over fifty. In fact, I thought that you were very well preserved. Of course you must be old but I never would call you senile."

"That is kind of you to say it that way, Mr. Taine."

"Just telling the truth, Kate."

"I believe you. I wish I could make up my mind to talk to you."

The wind was beginning to moan in the palm trees. In spite of the breeze, it seemed to be growing much warmer, almost hot. Taine wondered if it were going to rain

"Go ahead and talk, if you want to, Kate," he said.

"I believe I will. You knew me when I was on the Barbary Coast in Frisco. I was keeping George then. He would have starved many a day but for my help. I often gave Marcus money and as for Dr. Semon, there was a time when he begged me to marry him. In the early days of the adventure, I was the only one who was on Easy Street. Of course when they started to make the gold, I shared in their good times, but at the same time I was of great help to them. I held the group together and got all the Southern niggers to join us by my voodoo stuff. I was always true to them, and you know there were times when I could have made my pile by giving them away to the Government. They lived an easy life and they were white so long that I guess they forgot they were just black folks like I was. We have been on the island a long time: they used to make trips and they never did ask me to go. Guess they were ashamed of having a black woman with them.

"They were back of that insanity stuff. Dr. Flandings gave them the idea and they put it through the Glass Trust without arousing any suspicion. They failed—but they came close to succeeding. Perhaps you might have found out about it, but you never had a chance to even get started. When they found out how close they had come to success and yet how much better things were because of their work, they were discouraged. Flandings made a special trip all through the States and when he came back three years ago he said that life was happier and healthier there than it ever was before, and that they had gotten rid of all of our race. It was a white country for white people. That made them all feel sick, and then——— my! But the wind is coming up."

"Don't mind that—go on with your story," urged Taine.

"They decided to do something else—— and I told them not to—— I thought they had better stop while the stopping was good—— and Dr. Semon—— he used to say that he loved me—— he says to George, 'Poor old Kate is growing senile.' That's what he said, and then they went ahead with their plans and one night they all left, and that was three years ago and I have not seen them since."

"But what did they plan to do?" demanded Taine.

"I hain't no call to tell you all, but I'se gwine ter do it." In her excitement the negress had lapsed into her dialect. "They reckon ter git hold of the place where the sleeping medicine is made and make something that will make all those loony folk go wild. They reckon the loonies will tear everything wide open and kill all the rest er the folk that ain't crazy. I hain't no call to tell you—but Semon hadn't ought to call me that mean name!"

"BY the Seven Sacred Caterpillars!!" swore Taine, jumping to his feet. "If they succeed in doing that the country will be sure enough wrecked. They give that medicine on the first of every January. That gives us twenty days. We will broadcast the warning at once from the ship. It is too late for us to get to San Francisco in time. Get some of the servants to row me out to the steamer and——"

He did not finish his sentence, for just at that last word the storm broke. It was more of a tornado than a storm and more of a typhoon than a tornado. It caught the steamer and carried it to the coast of Australia, a sorry wreck, with over half of the crew lost. It carried away every house on the island and every one of the servants. It rushed in a diabolical fury over the island for half an hour, and then there came a death-like quiet. The full moon shone over the wreckage and saw two people unconscious under the timbers of the largest house—a white man and a black woman.

Ebony Kate and Taine did not die though they were rather sore and miserable for a few days. They could do nothing but make the best of things and they proceeded to do so. They fixed a roof over a part of the ruins, gathered together what food supplies they could find, and then settled down to housekeeping, with Taine as the master and Ebony Kate as cook.

Taine was miserable. Had it not been for his firm belief in predestination, he would have been much more depressed than he was. While not possessed of all the details, he was confident that on the first of January one hundred and fifteen million raving maniacs would be turned loose in his beloved country, all the more desperate and depraved because of their long sleep. He was sure that it was going to happen and there was nothing he could do to prevent it. In the meantime, he salvaged a revolver and some ammunition from the wreckage and practiced target shooting. He told Kate what he intended to do. On her knees, she begged him not to:

"You are a Christian man, Mr. Taine. Please don't go to your God with blood on yer hands."

But Taine only laughed at her:

"Just like shooting so many rats, Kate. Those white niggers have been the ruin of my country and the pest of my life. I do not want them to think that they have raised all this Hell and will not be punished for it. I am going to hide when they come, and wait till they start their bragging, and then I am going to walk out and kill them—one, two, three, four, just like I hit those cocoa nuts, and then you and I will wait our chance and go back home."

Nothing she could say had any effect on him.

January came and almost went. In fact, it was on the last day of January that a ship appeared on the horizon, came nearer, unloaded four men and several cases of goods and then sailed away. The four men proved to be George, Marcus and the two Doctors. They looked just about the same as when they left, perhaps a little older, but a thousand times happier. In fact, they were exuberant with joy as they greeted Ebony Kate.

"We got them this time, Kate. We certainly did," said George.

"Wait till supper time and then we will open some of the champagne, and you can tell me all about it."

They were a little worried about the damage done to the island and pitied the black woman on account of her months of loneliness. They promised to take her to Paris in a few months. The ship was going to stop for them on the return trip and from now on they were going to take life easy. She told them to put their things away and get ready for the supper. They knocked the top off one of the crates and filled her apron with canned goods, caviar, lobster and salad dressing.

At five that evening the five of them sat down to the supper. They were all in good spirits and the men, after a few glasses of champagne, all wanted to talk at once. Finally Ebony Kate said:

"Keep quiet. I's wanting to know what happened and you all talk so's I can't understand head or tail of it. George, you tell it, you'se got the bestest words."

"It was like this," said George, "we went to France and then across to the States. Didn't take long to show them that we knew our stuff and we got government jobs. We worked toward the laboratory end of it and somehow the men above us were always getting sick—

that was good stuff you made for us, Kate; it didn't make them suspicious; just made them want a long vacation—and every time one of them went away one of us was promoted. The beginning of last year we were just about in charge of the manufacturing and distribution end of the game, so we started in earnest and without their knowing a thing about it, we made about one hundred and twenty million doses of something that was just about dynamite. It looked like the sleeping drug, and it had the same chemical reactions, but it was certainly different in its effect. The last week we secretly destroyed all the records and formulae and a lot of the most delicate machinery. Then we rushed over to Vancouver and waited. On the second of January, we got absolutely correct reports from Seattle, one of the sleeping cities. One of the watchmen stood it as long as he could and then beat it to Canada. The radio sent the Canadian papers lots of detail. Every sleeping imbecile was just awake and raising unadulterated Hell of every description. We knew it wasn't any use to stay and since we were through, we were naturally anxious to get our things from the island and go to Paris for the rest of our lives. We won, Kate! Of course we cannot tell you every detail but it stands to reason that one million sane people couldn't do much against over one hundred and fifteen maniacs. It took us over forty years to wreck that nation but we did it—and it is going to stay wrecked."

"So you all's gwine ter go ter Paris?"

"Yes, just as soon as we can."

"Gwine ter take me with yer?"

"Well, now, Kate, you see it's this way. You have a good home here and we will always take care of you and see that you do not want for anything. But at your age you had better stay here and take things easy."

"Think I am too old?"

"It's like this, Kate," said Dr. Semon. "You have been here so long, that it is just like home here and you would not be happy anywhere else."

The black woman looked at the four white men at the table with her. She knew that they were really black—in more ways than one—she thought of that white man who was really white waiting to kill them—he had always treated her like a black woman, but then he had always been kind to her—— So she said:

"Suppose we end the supper with a drink of brandy?"

She served it to them, and then Marcus proposed a toast:

"To our friends, the whites of the United States, in Paradise, and may we never meet!"

They drank it standing, and then they all sat down.

Taine walked into the room.

They looked at him rather stupidly.

"Stand up and fight," he commanded. "I am here to kill you all, but I want to give you a chance. Pull out your guns and we will start shooting."

"Don't shoot them, Master Taine," whispered Kate. "Wait a little."

Taine had them covered with his revolver suspecting treachery of some kind but the four men simply grew quieter and yet more quiet, seated in their rattan chairs.

And finally the white man realized that they were dead.

Ebony Kate was sobbing hysterically.

Taine thought about it for some hours before he understood.

IN the course of some weeks, the steamer came back to the island. Taine made arrangements to have all the natives carried to the nearest populated island. He engaged passage for himself to British Columbia. He kept himself as busy as he could, to keep his mind steady. He felt young and there was no doubt that the Doctor had been right in advising him to go back to work, but at the same time he was more than worried about his family and his nation. He knew that he could not rest easy till he learned what had really happened.

It was not until they had dropped the natives and started in earnest for the long voyage across the Pacific that it was discovered that Ebony Kate was on board.

"I just couldn't leave you, Master Taine," she said. "There's no telling what you will find in the States, and you may need some one to cook for you. Even if your wife and children are all right, it will be handy to have me around to help with the work."

Taine couldn't do anything except to tell her that she might come.

Somehow he thought of the little black puppy.

He wanted to get word from the States but the radio on the steamer was out of order, so nothing could be learned until the ship reached Honolulu. Everything seemed as usual there. Taine rushed to the Governor's mansion and presented his letters of introduction.

"We thought you were dead, Mr. Taine," said that gentleman. "Your steamer ended upon the Australian coast, but all their charts were lost, and we had no means of locating you without a persistent search. I have two ships out now looking for you. Tell me all about it? Did you find your men?"

"I'll tell you after you tell me. I cannot wait a minute longer. Tell me what happened in the States?"

"You mean you haven't heard?"

"Not a word. Radio out of order. I knew they had a bad time but what really happened?"

"Make yourself comfortable, and I'll tell you," said the Governor. "On the first of January they gave the doses of sleeping medicine as usual and I think they gave about one hundred and seventeen million doses. It seems that they had more workers than usual and the entire work was finished by night. On the morning of the second, wireless messages came into Washington from every sleeping city that the sleepers were awake. When the central authorities went to the laboratories for advice they found the heads of the departments gone, the records destroyed and the complicated machinery wrecked. It was only then that they began to realize what had happened. Immediately word was sent to every sane community to have the people congregate and prepare to defend themselves. It was not necessary to warn the watchmen to flee for their lives: they were all frightened, as none of them had ever seen an insane person awake.

"For three days there was the most intense preparation in our living cities. Provisions were gathered, barbed wire fences put up and charged with electricity, the men were organized into companies and put on guard duty. By the end of the third day nothing happened, and the Government sent scouting planes over the cities to see what was going on. They reported that the cities seemed quite normal. Then the Government called for volunteers to go to New York City. There had been fifteen million sleepers there and they considered that what had taken place there, had taken place in every one of the sleeping cities. They decided on sending just five men: thought that a few would attract less attention from the insane than a crowd would.

"The account we received from the Government went

(*Continued on page* 431)

TEN DAYS TO LIVE

By C. J. Eustace

VILLIERS and I sat on the edge of the cliff and discussed our friend Eden, at whose house we were staying. Before the dawn on that eventful May morning no sound could be heard but the mellow murmuring of the ocean. Occasionally a soft breeze would rustle through the rose-bushes and flower-beds of the garden, and once in a while the grass would whisper as the wind from the sea caressed it.

"Of course, Eden's theory is all right as an idea," I remarked, "But the question is—can he do it? And if he can—will it have the effect which he claims?"

"There is nothing like hope, my dear Gaspard," Villiers replied with his sardonic smirk, "You are always impressing on me the value of that doubtful commodity."

"A beast, this Villiers," I said to myself. He was a man to be avoided . . . a misanthrope, an iconoclast, a blasphemer. A man without a soul. And yet, lives there a soulless man? Nevertheless, he was a cold, calculating machine of a man, with a whiplike tongue. I flatter myself that I am the only man for whom Villiers ever had any regard. And I liked Villiers, too—in a sort of way. He was honest and he was courageous. Only once have I ever seen Villiers frightened; he was badly frightened then.

"We'll go in and see Eden now," I said, and rising, we made our way together towards the big, silent house up the road.

Villiers smiled with his bitterly ironical smile, and little he knew it, but it was a dead man's smile. The whole great world, so cold and friendless to the oppressed, so roseate-hued to the young, so mellowed and sometimes cruel to the old, was rushing towards its appointed destiny. The incubus of a great catastrophe was upon us all.

We had breakfast in Eden's big dining-room. Phillipa, Eden's sister, presided over the coffee-pot. I sat on one side of her, and, like the young fool I was, drank in her beauty avidly. Eden, pale and shrunken with the strain of his researches, with wild visionary eyes, faced me. He had been working all night in his laboratory. The result of his experiments was to be announced that morning. His face was ashen-pale, and a cold dew stood out on his forehead. The knuckles of his hands were white. Rings of blue were tinged about his eyes. It was his heart, I knew, and I feared for my friend Eden's life. He was a very sick man.

He devoured his breakfast as though he was famished, and when he had finished, he leaned back in his chair, fumbling for a match to light his eternal cigarette. We all watched him anxiously, but with the first puff he was himself again. He smiled crookedly at us.

"Well, my friends, Gaspard and Villiers," he began, "I have succeeded. I am going to perform an experiment which will revolutionize the history of the world."

He choked suddenly, and we rose to our feet. We could hear the rattle of his breath in his throat. He made a rapid motion with his hand to Phillipa.

"Quick—the brandy!" he cried.

She ran from her seat at the table and poured him out a stiff peg, which he took neat. A tinge of color returned to his pallid cheeks. Villiers and I sank back in our chairs again.

"I am all right now," he assured us, "but I don't know how long I'm going to last. Therefore I am about to take you two into my confidence. You, Gaspard—take my arm. Villiers, my friend, you will close and lock the dining-room door from the outside."

I caught Phillipa's eye, and it pleaded with me. I took Eden's arm.

"What about your sister?" I asked.

"Phillipa must remain where she is," he replied grimly. "Villiers will lock her in the dining-room until we return."

"Is that safe with Greely about the village?" I protested.

Eden gave me one look.

"It is because of Greely," he said.

I gave him my arm to lean on, and together we half led him from the room. Behind me Villiers turned, bowing to Phillipa, gently closing the door, and turning the key in the lock from the outside. The three of us were alone in the spacious hall.

WE followed Eden down the hallway to a door at the far end. This door led to his laboratory,

WHEN man tampers with the forces of nature, something is always likely to happen, and most of the time something does happen. Our new author presents an enthralling story of titanic forces let loose by the cunning of man, which almost brought the world to an end.

As yet we know little more than nothing about the titanic forces let loose when we begin to disintegrate matter. We know that every particle of matter contains titanic forces compared to which the highest explosives are mere toys. Some day, these forces will be let loose, unless conquered by man. If not, we stand a good chance that the world will be blown up, and explode; just as certain stars are exploding right along, probably due to some atomic forces.

Today, we handle ordinary matter exactly as savages would handle dynamite. The aborigine will not be harmed by a stick of dynamite. He can play with it, kick it around, hammer it all he wants to, and nothing will happen. The reason is that he has no detonator to explode it, no key to unlock its energy. The same is true of ordinary matter. The five cent piece in your pocket, an ordinary pebble, a glass of water, all contain forces which are titanic and sufficient to keep the entire machinery of the world running for weeks at a time. Yet, we have no key to unlock this energy.

The present story brings this home more vividly, and all we can say is that we hope that the liberation of energy never comes about in the manner described in this story.

Four silver knobs were the radio valves in appearance protruded from the top of it. A circular framework of wires stood on the top of these knobs and the middle of the framework was a silvered concave plate to generate supersonic and form like an ordinary glass mirror

and no servant was ever allowed to pass its portals. Eden alone had the key to the door, and this he inserted in the lock and admitted us to a black cavity which yawned into space. On coming closer to the door, I saw that a flight of stone steps gaped before us, leading down and seeming to beckon into the darkness of a cellar beneath. Eden loosened himself from my arm.

"I am going before you to turn on the lights," he said.

We could hear his echoing footsteps descending into the void below. Presently there came the click of an electric switch, and the place became flooded with light.

"You go first, Villiers," I whispered to my companion, partly because I had a nasty presentiment of something unusual about to happen. "I'll shut the door after me."

At the bottom of the steps we found ourselves in a stone passageway illuminated by a single powerful electric bulb. Eden led the way up to another door, and, flinging this open, bade us enter.

A vast cave within stretched before us. Rock walls rose on all sides and towered to the ceiling. The floor was a natural bed of sand. The ceiling rose over us like a dome, and at the top there was a vent about six feet square through which the morning sun poured its blinding rays. It was evident that the cave had once been under water, for the floor was littered with small sea shells. The opening in the ceiling was a hole in the solid wall of cliff, which from the sea shore seemed to rise unbroken from the beach. I could glimpse a little panorama of sky through the vent.

But it was neither the room, nor yet the rays of the sun, nor yet the panorama of sky which rivetted our attention. For in the centre of the sandy floor stood a small, box-like machine, and it was upon this contraption that our keenest interest was bent.

Four silver knobs, very like radio valves in appearance, protruded from the top of it. A circular framework of wires stood out from the top of these knobs, and in the middle of this framework was a silvered concave plate, in general appearance and form like an ordinary glass mirror.

Eden approached the machine eagerly. He watched our faces with frenzied eyes, as if he would gouge out our very thoughts. Then he spoke.

"This, my friends," he whispered, and his whisper was sibilant with suppressed eagerness," this little machine is the result of all my years of investigation. I have accomplished in this little machine what men have been seeking to discover since the dawn of time. This knob here," he touched a small handle at the side of the apparatus, "will set this circular wire framework in motion. As soon as it begins to revolve, this large silver bar begins to disintegrate and in so doing a stupendous power will be projected towards the sun."

He paused. We both stared at him instinctively, wondering what he was going to disclose.

"But what will the thing do?" Villiers interjected in his deliberate way.

"What will it do?" repeated Eden. "It will generate heat. You both know that this earth is of spherical shape, and that it revolves around the sun in about three hundred and sixty-five days and six hours —what we call a year. At the same time that we revolve around the sun, we also turn on our own axis —once in every twenty-four hours. The only reason which prevents us from whirling aimlessly through space is the gravitational or pulling-power of the sun. The earth is constantly trying to pull away from the sun, but the same pulling-power of the sun will not allow us to get any further from the radius of our orbit than a certain number of miles. We reckon this distance at about ninety millions of miles."

Villiers and I both nodded. We were absorbed. This was Eden in his most enchanting vein, disclosing the mysteries of science to us. Eden had dropped his voice mysteriously, as if his next words were to be of vast import, as indeed they were.

"What would happen, do you think, if that distance between the sun and ourselves were decreased?"

He glared at us madly. The silence of that cave was tangible. I felt like shouting, crying—anything to break that awful silence. Villiers was the first to grasp the significance of Eden's words.

"My God, do you mean—", he gasped hoarsely, "do you mean to swing the earth off its orbit?"

"Ah, thank God you have grasped it!" said Eden, and even as I gazed at him in horror, I realized that research had turned his brain, and that we were in the presence of a madman. "Yes, I shall swing the earth off its orbit. By means of my indirected beam—disintegration waves, and of a process embodied in this little machine, by which it can send waves constantly towards the sun even after it has set, just as radio waves are hurled through the ether, I intend to bring this earth several million miles nearer the sun.

"As soon as I set this framework in motion our atmosphere will at once begin to become warmer. Our climate will become more bracing, more rarefied. A luxurious vegetation will grow up everywhere. The evolution of every man, woman and child in the world will be affected. It will alter the ways of what we have come to know as nature. It may even change the length of our days and nights. It will certainly shorten our years. We shall feel years younger. Our frames will become electrified in the buoyancy of a new atmosphere."

VILLIERS and I gazed at each other fearfully. Eden, for all his madness, was not a man to make statements at random. Although we could not credit what he had just told us, it was quite probable that the machine might produce some extraordinary atmospheric change over the earth, and it was our duty, as sane men, to discover the power of the mechanism, and how dangerous it was.

"Of course it may take people several years to become accustomed to the atmospheric changes," went on Eden, "But afterwards—afterwards mankind will realize what a great boon I shall have conferred upon humanity."

"But what are you going to do?" I gasped in amazement, "How are you going to accomplish this thing?"

He held up his hand for silence. He might have been addressing a mass-multitude of the nations of the earth, so impressive was his mein.

"Gaspard and Villiers, my friends," he said solemnly, "when I turn this lever with this key, the framework will begin to revolve. *From that moment on there is danger.* If this machine is not controlled, it might mean that our proximity to the sun would decrease to such an alarming extent that we should be absorbed in an all-pervading conflagration. I can only conjecture as to the proper moment when the machine must be stopped. Once we are swung off our orbit, gravity may do anything to us. We scientists must take risks—and I am willing to take this risk which I believe is negligible. But, my friends," and

here he dropped his voice to the merest whisper, "this is where I am going to put my trust in you."

He stared at us both wildly, as if challenging us to contradict the plausibility of his statements. But we were both silent, and I think that even sardonic Villiers was awed by the magnitude of the conception.

"This man Greely, Gaspard, whom you mentioned just now," he dropped his voice again, and looked about him carefully, as if he expected to find lurking figures in the shadows of the cave, "he is a common working-man. He is a madman and a degenerate. He has tried to attack me several times while I was working here. He has a delusion that I am planning to kill him. Absurd—if you wish, but it is his delusion. And it is in my defence, my dear friends, that I wish you both to take a part. In case anything happens to me, I wish you to smash this machine before it is too late."

"But what do you mean by 'before it is too late?'" Villiers inquired. And I could tell by the steely glint in his usually lustreless eyes, that he was impressed.

"After five days it will be dangerous to let the machine run," Eden explained. "By that time I anticipate that we shall be near enough to the sun to feel some palpable atmospheric change."

Villiers and I glanced at each other again. It was quite clear that our dear friend Eden's mind had completely gone. He was advancing upon us now with book in hand.

"Swear before me in God's name that you will destroy this machine if I am not here to look after it myself," he commanded.

For a moment we hesitated, but then, perceiving that no harm, at any rate, could come from taking such a meaningless oath, we each swore solemnly.

After this little ceremony was over, Eden stooped quickly over the machine and touched the small handle at the side. In a flash the framework began to revolve. Faster and faster it went, and as it revolved, a soft humming sound, like the droning of a giant bee, could be heard. After he had demonstrated to us how easily the machine could be started, he switched it off, and beckoned us back out of the laboratory and into the house above.

No sooner had we emerged from the cellar, into the hallway again, than we were startled by the sound of a frantic scream coming from the direction of the dining-room. Instinctively we rushed forward, for the voice had been Phillipa's and from the sound of it we could all tell that she was terribly frightened.

CHAPTER II

VILLIERS was the first to enter the room, and I heard him swear under his breath. When Eden and I followed close behind him, a peculiar spectacle met our gaze.

Phillipa was cringing back against the wall, whilst facing her, apparently engaged only in making the most fearsome grimaces at her, stood the most repulsive man I had ever seen. I recognized him at once as Greely, from the descriptions given me by Villiers.

Greely was a degenerate who frequented the village inns, and slunk about the beach near the shore. It was while on one of these aimless excursions that he found the hole in the cliff leading to Eden's laboratory. Eden had found him down there, examining the machine with great curiosity, about ten days before our visit. Fortunately the man was in a half-crazed condition, or he would undoubtedly have attacked Eden, who was no match for him in strength.

Greely had evidently entered the dining-room by way of the French windows, for one of these was wide open, and the carpet and floor directly beneath it were soiled by the passage of someone's rough and filthy boots. The man himself was a huge broad-shouldered giant, with an evil and bestial countenance. His face was hairy and pock-marked, and the vile, narrow eyes he turned on us as we entered the room were full of base animal passion.

Villiers, whose features became literally distorted with cruelty when he was angry, stepped up to the man. I saw the passion die out of Greely's wicked eyes, and a coward's fear replace it. He cringed away from Villiers, and yelped like a whipped cur.

"I ain't done no harm, mister," he said in a whining tone." I only just come in to see if the lady could spare a bite to eat. I ain't had a bite for three days now."

"You lie," said Villiers quietly, and his voice was like steel. "Get out of here—and never let me see you again."

The man shrank back as if he had been struck. Villiers' anger was terrible to witness.

"I'll go, mister," he whined. "I ain't done no harm, but I'll go." And he began shuffling his way backwards towards the window.

"If I ever catch you in here again—I'll kill you," hissed Villiers.

I watched Greely as he lumbered away across the lawn towards the shrubbery bordering the edge of the cliff. He turned before disappearing down the cliff side, and shook his fist at us. His face was malignant with fiendish passion.

Villiers turned towards where Phillipa stood, her hand on her heart.

"I hope that he didn't frighten you, Miss Eden," he said courteously.

She smiled at him nervously.

"He came in so suddenly, I — — I hadn't time to think," she replied, but I suspected that she was more frightened of Villiers than she had been of Greely.

We all went out on the lawn after that, and Phillipa gave me her hand as I stood back for her to pass safely through the French window. Her fingers were trembling, but they clung to mine in confidence and I retained their pressure. Somehow I was glad then that I was not capable of the cold ferocity Villiers had shown in his treatment of the man.

That night I tossed and turned in my bed, troubled by vague disquieting thoughts and premonitions. The darkness seemed to quiver with a sort of restlessness, and I mused over the events of the day with some misgiving. Could Eden really accomplish this stupendous thing of which he boasted? What would be the effect of bringing the earth nearer the sun? What would happen, if, through some miscalculation on his part, we were all precipitated for all eternity through space? And then drowsily, I thought of Phillipa, dearest of all women. And next, with a thrill of horror, I remembered the hairy, pock-marked face of Greely, and the evil, hungry eyes he had cast upon Phillipa. With such thoughts racing through my mind I fell into an uneasy slumber.

I was awakened, it seemed after an incredibly short space of time, by the sensation of someone shaking me fiercely by the shoulders. I sat up in bed, and gazed into the frantic eyes of Phillipa.

Her face was deathly pale, and her hair disordered.

"Come— come quickly," she cried. "There is someone else in the house. My— my brother heard, and he got up and went downstairs — and they're fight-

ing. I heard him cry out. Please come— you must come!"

"My God," I ejaculated, and half flinging on a bath-robe, I ran down the dark corridor towards the room in which Eden slept.

But someone was already there before me. When I gripped the handle of the door and flung it open, it was to find a dark figure crouched over an inanimate form on the floor. The figure turned in a flash at my entrance, and I saw that it was Villiers. His face was white and strained, and when he saw Phillipa, he held out his hands on either side of him as if to shield us from the sight of the lifeless thing on the floor.

"Take her away, Gaspard," he said hoarsely, "There's something foul being done here."

Before I could prevent her, Phillipa had rushed forward, and the next instant was kneeling beside the body of her brother on the floor.

EDEN was quite dead. Of that there could be no doubt. His face was horribly distorted, and his neck was swollen from the pressure of powerful hands. His eyes were nearly starting out of his head, and the whole position of the body was indescribably horrible. It was evident, however, that he had put up a good fight against the intruder, for the room was littered with clothes, and the dressing-table cloth had been swept on the floor, carrying with it the mass of bottles, brushes, and other personal paraphernalia.

Some minutes later I took Phillipa gently by the arm, and led her away quite passively to her room. The shock had been so great that I do not think she realized what was happening.

"Go to bed, Miss Eden," I tried to comfort her as best I could, "He's beyond anything we can do for him now. You must leave it to Villiers and me to bring this murderer to justice."

I went back to Villiers and the room of death. He was gazing out of the window, and down at the sheer sides of the ivy-covered walls.

"Did you see him?" I inquired.

"Yes, it was Greely," he replied, without looking round. "I burst open the door just as he was getting out of the window. I was too late to get him, but you can see from the ivy that he didn't waste any time getting away."

We were both silent for a minute, and I believe we were both thinking of Phillipa.

"Was any — money or anything taken?" I ventured.

"No," he replied shortly, "You know that he didn't come for that."

We were silent again, and then Villiers spoke.

"Do you know, I was just thinking, this leaves us in a deuce of a fix."

"In what way? Do you mean Phillipa?"

"Well — no," he answered thoughtfully, "I wasn't thinking of her particularly, although, of course, we shall see that everything is all right for her. Poor old Eden," he mused, "I wonder if he was right about that machine?"

I stared at him blankly for a minute, until the full purport of his words became clear. And then, in a flash, I realized what he meant.

"You mean — you mean —" I gasped, but he stopped me short.

"The machine," he said.

Instantly we must have thought of the same contingency, for I saw Villiers glance across the floor at me, and he must have seen the answering stare of fear in my own eyes.

"I'll go," I said, sensing his thought.

"Wait," he cried, and before I could make a movement, he bent and covered the still form of our mutual friend, Eden, with a sheet. "I will go with you. There is nothing more we can do here."

We hurried together through the spacious hallway. With feverish fingers we unlocked the door admitting us to the stone steps. With beating hearts we ran along the corridor leading to the cave where we had been shown the infernal machine only the night before. Hardly daring to think of what we should discover, we flung open the door.

Except for the chemical apparatus, Bunsen burners and test tubes, weird-shaped oblong bottles and basins, and a mass of electrical material, the place was empty. *The machine had gone.*

The full consequence of what the theft of the machine might mean did not at once occur to me. I stood and gaped at Villiers stupidly. The ticking of the watch on my wrist came to my ears quite audibly, and far away in the night I could hear the thunderous rumble of some freight train. Then somehow or other I managed to pull myself together, and managed to force a laugh.

"Come," I remarked," we must look at this thing in a common-sense way. I, for one, don't believe that Eden could do what he claimed to be able to do. We both know that he was partially unbalanced, and anyway, the odds are that Greely will not know how to start the machine. God wouldn't allow such a thing to come to pass.

I saw a grim, ironical smile hover for a moment over Villiers' mirthless features.

"It would be interesting to see in just what a way the world would take the news," he mused half aloud. "Just ten days to live, eh? You know, Gaspard, there is a prophecy in that good Book of yours which you're so fond of quoting, to the effect that although the world shall never again be destroyed by flood, yet there might be a possibility of its destruction by fire."

"I have more faith than that in the goodness of a Deity," I replied somewhat stiffly, for theology was the basis of much disagreement between Villiers and myself. "Anyway, to return to the immediate present, what are we to do now?"

"I suggest that we go to bed," my companion proposed imperturbably. "We can do nothing more tonight. And in the morning we can notify the police, and have a look through the village for Greely. If he has turned on the machine, and we are not able to find it, and if what Eden said about it was true— then in less than ten days, the world is doomed. However, let's hope that Greely has not been indiscreet enough to hide it where we cannot find it."

And with this grim jest on his lips, Villiers turned and we made our way out of that chilly cave, and up the cellar steps to the hall again. I lay awake most of the night wondering what the morrow would bring forth, and imagining that little, whirling machine revolving steadily, almost noiselessly, and of the madman Greely watching it in fascination whilst the earth hurtled madly through space, drawing nearer hour by hour to that great fiery inferno that keeps us all alive and moving.

CHAPTER III

VILLIERS was up before me in the morning. He knocked at my door at a very early hour, fully dressed, and with his sour, sardonic features kindled with a sort of weird animation.

"I've been thinking out our position during the

night," he confided to me. "I'm going out into the grounds to see if I can catch a glimpse of our friend Greely. If I want your help, I'll call out."

"And what do you think I'm going to do?" I objected, "just hang about?"

"By no means," he replied, as if he had thought out the whole scheme beforehand, "I want you to look after Miss Eden. "I'm sure you are capable of doing that, my dear Gaspard, far more thoroughy than I am," he added with a smirk.

Well, I did not deny it. I was as much in love with Phillipa as I would ever be with anyone. To me she would always be the dearest woman in the world, and the thought that she might come to some harm through negligence on our part, filled me with righteous anxiety.

"Don't worry— I shall guard her with my life," I assured him, and he went away from me still smirking.

I did not see Phillipa until later in the day. There were dark rings around her eyes, and I knew that she had been mourning for her brother. Nevertheless I was determined to speak to her of my feelings for her at the earliest possible moment, and to offer her both my love and protection if she would marry me.

In her presence I forgot all about the possibility of that sinister little machine, which might be revolving noiselessly in some secret nook in the village. It was not until evening that my visions received a somewhat rude jolt.

We were in the middle of May at that time, and it was usual for the sun to set some time between six and seven o'clock in the evening. That day had been a beautiful spring day, with summer's promise in the air until late in the afternoon. I was sitting with Phillipa in the grounds when suddenly a wind sprang up, which in half an hour reached the proportions of a gale.

It moaned and tore over the cliffs, tossing the sea into a thousand white-crested billows, beating with ferocity against the walls of Eden's old house, and even uprooting a tree in the garden.

Phillipa and I ran for shelter to the house, and stood side by side gazing out of the window at the signs of chaos. While we were standing there, Villiers came up silently from behind, and remained there for a minute without speaking. And as we three stood there, a more than usually fierce gust of wind struck the house, shaking its old foundations, and giving us the illusion perhaps, that the house rocked and that the earth trembled beneath our feet.

Illusion or no illusion, I know that the sensation was so real that I turned round to Villiers and found him ashen-faced, staring out of the window at the terrible landscape.

"My God!" he gasped. "Did you ever know such a storm in May? It looks like the end of the world, doesn't it?"

From the sea below the cliffs, came the mighty roar of breakers crashing vainly against the chalk barriers. Black clouds scurried across the sky, and quite suddenly—in less than five minutes—the darkness of night closed down on us. I glanced at my watch at this juncture, and found that the time was only 4:45 in the afternoon. *The sun had set two hours before its appointed time.*

I know that my knees were trembling to such an extent that I could hardly present a semblance of normality to Phillipa. Fortunately she had left us shortly after the darkness came upon us. To her this was nothing more than an unusually ferocious storm. But Villiers and I knew different. It was the confirmation of our worst fears.

We sat still in the semi-darkness for some minutes after she had gone. A single oil lamp flickered from a rusty hook in the hall. I heard the hiss of Villiers' breath through his teeth . . . Finally I could stand the silence no longer.

"Well," I whispered, "what do you make of it?"

His voice came to me weirdly out of the gloom.

"Make of it! Doesn't it prove that friend Eden was right for once?" he gasped hoarsely. "Greely, in his ignorance of the true functions of the machine, has set the thing going. Our only hope is to find him and discover where he has hidden it."

"Good God!" I groaned. "The thing seems impossible. Perhaps it was only some sort of a cyclone. Such storms have visited the coast here before, you know."

"Is there any storm in the world which would cause the sun to set a couple of hours ahead of time, Gaspard?" he observed sarcastically.

There was little sleep for us that night. In the stilly darkness we searched all over the grounds and along the beach for some sign of Greely. The orchard was explored from top to bottom. The Italian rock garden was searched from end to end. We peeped into holes in the cliffside. The cave-like laboratory in which Eden worked gave us no clues, for the floor, although sandy in spots, was for the most part rocky enough to leave no trace of footprints.

IT was long past midnight when we gave up the search. We were in the vicinity of the cave at the moment, and I remember that Villiers led the way in, and we both sat down on some sort of a packing-case and gazed at each other blankly. Through the vent in the ceiling we could survey the sky. I could see the twinkling of several stars, and the tops of two trees in the garden. There was a pigeon-house built on one of these trees, and I fancied I could hear the low cooing of one of the birds to its mate.

Then I thought of Phillipa, and I think I realized then what an awful catastrophe this thing might bring about. Here we were in this twentieth century, with science making such rapid strides that it was hard for the layman to keep abreast of its discoveries, cornered by a little machine, which was generating a tremendous power against which all the incantations and prayers of men were useless. I could just see the whiteness of Villiers' face through the darkness, and it looked as though he were smiling.

"Well, Gaspard old friend," his voice came to me weirdly out of the gloom, "we've done our best for tonight. It looks as though it may be up to this Deity of yours to save the world after all. I wonder how people will take it."

I turned on him sharply, for he was getting on my nerves.

"God will be merciful," I said. "Villiers, this catastrophe will fetch more people back to religion than all the preaching that has ever been done."

"Superstitious fear, eh?" he mocked. "I think that I, at any rate, shall die with a stiff upper lip."

And I was such a coward myself that I did not doubt him. Afterwards I had cause to ponder his words.

The stars were still twinkling in the Heavens when we parted—some of them seemed to laugh at our helplessness.

The next morning I was aroused by the full force of the sun pouring through my open window. Feeling drowsy, but thinking, because of the high posi-

tion of the sun in the sky, that it must be getting late, I raised myself lazily on one arm and looked at my watch. *It registered five o'clock.*

Abruptly the awful realization of what it meant came to me, and an overwhelming fear clutched at my heart. Eden had been right, madman though he was, and he had succeeded beyond his fondest dreams. But it might be, also, that he had inevitably condemned the world. There could no longer be any doubt about the possibility that his machine could affect the earth's orbit. The short twilight and early sunset of the night before, and now this early sunrise and the sun's late position in the firmament, confirmed my fears. The world was surely and unavoidably being drawn towards the sun.

I know that the first realization that the unbelievable was actually occurring, prostrated me with fear. I sat up in bed and gazed like a madman at the ball of fire glowing so rosily in the sky. Then a sort of frenzied reaction came over me, and I leaped out of bed and threw on my clothes.

Villiers slept at the back of the house, and the sun had not yet disturbed him. I knocked at his door, and receiving no reply, entered the room. He was asleep, and I had to shake him by the shoulders to arouse him.

"Do you know what time it is?" I asked excitedly.

He blinked at me for a moment, and then looked out of his windows at the shadow of the trees on the lawn. Their silhouette was very short, and it was obvious that the sun was nearly overhead.

"Good Lord," he grinned, "why didn't you wake me? I must have slept the clock round."

"It is now half past five in the morning," I said meaningly, and going to the window I pulled aside the curtain so that he might see more clearly.

"Half past five?" he repeated in a puzzled tone. And then realization came to him, just as it had come to me. "Good God!" he said. Then, "The sun! Look where it is."

"Exactly," I observed, and we were silent.

NOW neither of us, as a matter of fact, could actually see the sun. Villiers' room was at the back of the house, as I have said, and my room, which faced the cliffs, was in the front. But we could both realize from the shadows on the lawn that the sun must be very nearly overhead. And even as we watched, a new beam of light cut across the grass like a needle point, and I saw Villiers' face go pale.

"Let's get down and see what the papers have to say," he remarked grimly. And suiting the action to the word, he commenced to dress rapidly.

We had to wait for an hour downstairs before the paper boy arrived. He was only a lad, and when he saw us both waiting for him on the doorstep, he glanced up at us fearfully as if expecting to receive our verdict on this extraordinary state of affairs. His young face was pale, and there were frightened lines around his mouth.

"What's it mean, mister?" he queried. "It ain't natural—this here daylight. It's got 'em scared—even up in the city."

"Never mind what it means," said Villiers gruffly. "Give us the paper. And here's something for yourself," and he handed the boy some silver.

The paper was full of the peculiar storm which had ravaged the entire country the night before. Most of the papers would have gone to press too early to have any mention of that morning's early sunrise. But all sorts of weird opinions were advanced to account for the previous evening's disturbances, and even the astronomers were scared out of their usual calm.

SUN CHANGES ITS SPOTS.

Storm of Unparalleled Fury Wrecks Country. Accompanied by Terrifying Darkness.

London:—A ninety-mile-an-hour gale accompanied by a moaning sound and a heavy downpour of rain swept over the entire country last night, uprooting trees, lifting the roofs off farm-houses, and doing untold damages to the early crops.

From several centres come stories of near escapes from death, and in many places people are homeless as a result of one of the worst storms ever experienced in England. The curious part of the storm, however, was the swift darkness which descended in its wake. The whole country lay in pitch darkness before five o'clock, and the storm had died away just as quickly as it had come.

Various explanations are forthcoming from astronomers on last night's cyclonic display. One of the most feasible explanations comes from Sir Philip Sims, who is well known as the famous discoverer of Sims' Comet.

"Curious outbursts of flame on the sun's surface, usually known as sun spots, are known to have a direct bearing on atmospheric conditions on the earth," says Sir Philip. "It is probable that the position of one of these vast bodies of molten material has changed on the sun's surface, and that last night's severe storm was caused by atmospheric disturbances which could be attributed to this change."

"Sounds all right, doesn't it?" Villiers said sardonically, as we read this short account together. There was a lot more about the storm, and more theories were advanced, bringing in shadows and clouds, and other things to account for the sudden darkness. After that morning's extraordinary sunrise, there was little doubt that the entire press of the world would be making comments on the phenomena by the evening.

Villiers and I had a long talk that morning, and we decided that it was our bounden duty to the world to make the fact of Eden's experiments known to the world. We decided that we would wait until the morrow to see if anything further transpired, and if by that time we had not found the machine, and the atmospheric conditions still showed signs of reacting to Eden's machine, we would go together to the Prime Minister and demand that he publish the facts for the benefit of the world at large, or deal with it in whatever manner he thought fit.

"According to Eden," Villiers calculated grimly, "we still have seven or eight days in which to enjoy the carnal luxuries of this life. And the world was made in seven days, friend Gaspard, Eh?"

He went up to London that morning, while I spent the day with Phillipa. That day I broke the news to her very gently. She was worried, poor child, but I do not think that she fully realized what I meant. The police had been around the grounds on the lookout for Greely. They had been in the house, also, asking her questions about poor Eden's life and habits. I assured them, as well as I could, that so far as I was aware, he hadn't an enemy in the world. I furnished them also with a vivid description of Greely. But of course we had told them nothing of the machine, or of the effect it was exerting on the earth, even at that very moment. We intended to keep this a secret as long as it was humanly possible to do so.

That day was the first day of the great heat. By eight o'clock, when normally the sun should just be comfortably launched on its daily round, the heat was sweltering. The policemen took off their coats, and the fat inspector was visibly perturbed.

It was dark at *three o'clock,* and a great hush had settled over the countryside. It was as if the whole of nature was aware of the approach of some unknown, but all-powerful cataclysm. The voices of the birds were silent, and the wind dropped, and only a faint, lazy lapping murmur came from the sea beyond the cliffs. But as I passed the two trees in the garden above the cave, I heard the persistent coo-cooing of the pigeons from the pigeon hatch, and I wondered why they were not frightened like the rest of nature.

VILLIERS had not returned from the Metropolis before the evening papers were out. I had an opportunity, therefore, to glance through these before he brought back more precise news from the city.

The papers, as I had predicted, commented fully on the early sunrise and sunset. Frantic headlines in enormous black type featured the news on the front pages of many of the more sensational journals, and even the columns of the conservative dailies were alive with wild and improbable conjectures. The diversity of opinion as to the cause of the different phenomena was astounding. One paper advanced the theory that the excessive radio-activity of the atmosphere was responsible for some of the signs witnessed. It might be possible, as this paper pointed out, that the millions of radio waves which were daily hurled through the air had in some way or other split up the component parts of the atmosphere, thus preventing the earth from turning on its axis at the proper speed and so defying the gravity of the whole solar system. This theory was followed up by other papers, which advocated the seizure of all transmitting stations.

The theory of sun spots, at first advanced by Sir Philip Sims, was also referred to impressively, especially by the more conservative papers.

The *New York Wire,* in an editorial on the subject written by an astronomer of note, sounded a note of cheerful optimism:

> New York:—The present atmospheric disturbances can, and in all probability will be attributed to gigantic derangements on the solar surface. Rifts in the sun's envelope, popularly known as sun spots, are known to produce climatic changes on the earth.

Some of the more irrational theories advanced were manifestly absurd, and not worthy of serious consideration. Someone advanced the idea that the sun was being screened from the earth by the nebulous tail of a comet. It was clear that every part of the earth's surface must be affected in a sense identically by the changes. From all over Europe, America, Asia, and from South Africa came reports of early darkness and an astonishingly short day. From the northernmost point of Norway came an interesting bit of news. In that Arctic region, where the sun brooded over a frozen landscape for three months at a time, an unprecedented thaw had set in. Everywhere the ice was cracking, and in some cases immense bergs had split into many pieces, making the sea very dangerous for ships in the vicinity.

Villiers returned from London about seven o'clock that evening. His usually mocking expression had vanished, and his features showed signs of weariness and strain. Quite clearly he was alarmed.

"Any luck?" was his first query, almost as soon as he saw me. And as I shook my head, I saw his face fall.

"We've looked everywhere, and the village has been thoroughly searched," I reported, "Phillipa and I went over every room in the house. We ransacked Eden's study, but we found no information of any value to us. Evidently Eden was determined that his secret should die with him. If you had told me a week ago that we would be in this position, I should have laughed in your face."

Villiers' old mirthless grin returned, penetrating the immobility of his features, like a ray of light in a dark place.

"It seems then, that we're stumped," he remarked nonchalantly, throwing himself into a chair. "That is one of the unfortunate things about science—it is absolutely ruthless to those who make mistakes or take liberties with it. I have never seen the city in such a state of commotion, Gaspard. Business is practically at a standstill. And so soon in our little program! Just imagine what it will be like in a few days' time, when people begin to realize that the end of the world has really come!"

"My God!" I gasped, "It's the truth."

"We may as well face it," he went on. "Nothing can save us now unless we discover either Greely or the machine. As a matter of fact, Greely is bound to come out some time in the near future, no matter where he may be hiding. The heat will compel him to show himself. But I don't believe he will identify the machine as the cause of all this disturbance. He is just as likely to let that run on until the end comes."

"What else is happening in the city?" I asked, to change the subject.

"Many of the stores are closed. Everywhere people are trying to account for the early darkness. Groups of men stand on every street corner. But they're all scared, Gaspard, they're all scared out of their wits. They're even forgetting about making money."

He chuckled grimly to himself.

"There was an old Greek doing a great business—selling smoked glass to have a peep at the sun. Rather ironical—what? Buying smoked glass to have a look at the sun! Eh?" And he laughed aloud this time.

"Stop laughing, for goodness sake!" I cried sharply. I was surprised that he got on my nerves so easily. "We've got to act now, and act quickly. We shall all go up to London tomorrow, and make this thing known to the Premier. We shall at least have shared our sense of responsibility then."

"Do you think that he'll believe you?" asked Villiers sardonically.

"He'll believe anything by tomorrow," I declared boldly, and did not underestimate the truth of my words.

Imagine the universal dismay and horror of a populace witnessing the dawn of another day, at what should have been one o'clock in the morning. All over the world people started up from their beds to find the brilliant rays of the sun flooding their bedrooms with light, when normally everything should have been in darkness and hushed in sleep.

Villiers and I were up as soon as the light came; we witnessed one of the most awe-inspiring sunrises it has ever been my lot to see. In less than five minutes, the huge molten face of the sun climbed

above the horizon. If one watched steadily *one could see it moving.*

It had been decided that we should take Phillipa with us to the Metropolis for safety's sake, and that we should all visit the Premier together. Accordingly the three of us packed ourselves into Eden's car, and in half an hour we were rushing through the suburbs of London.

Here we saw the first signs of the universal panic which was to follow later as more effects of the catastrophe continued to make themselves felt. Most of the shops and stores were closed. In one place we saw an enormous line of people jostling each other in their efforts to get into a bank.

"Turning to religion, eh?" Villiers smirked back at me from his seat at the front of the car. "Don't you believe it, old man. A short life and a merry one for all of us now."

"I don't apprehend for a moment that we have anything really to fear," I replied, and Phillipa by my side pressed my hand.

I smiled down at her, and as I met the trusting gaze of her eyes, I prayed that I should be able to act out my part in this affair like a man.

It was quite evident, as we approached the congested traffic centres of the city, that a spirited effort was being made to keep things going in as normal a manner as possible. I even found a sort of grim satisfaction in watching the unhurried antics of a traffic policeman, directing the mass of automobiles at one particularly massed section. I envied this man his *sang-froid,* and wondered morbidly what he would be doing seven days later.

The heat was now almost unbearable, and it became clear to me that, although Eden had not specified directly in what manner the danger would lie if we approached the sun too closely, in four or five days we should have reached a stage where an all-consuming conflagration would be inevitable. I shuddered.

THERE seemed to be some sort of disorderly crowd hanging round the railing of the Premier's residence. We parked our car around the corner under the shadow of the Cenotaph to the Unknown Soldier. Had they all died in vain?

We had almost to fight our way through this mass of people before we came face to face with two burly and perspiring policemen guarding the entrance to the Premier's door. I clung to Phillipa, who was white to the lips and evidently greatly frightened, whilst Villiers went ahead. I heard his arresting voice ring out even above the babel of shouting about us.

"We've got to see the Premier," I heard him cry. "It is on vitally important business."

"That's what they all say, mister," grinned back one of the policemen. "I guess your business is no more important than Sir Philip Sims', who's in with the Premier now."

"The great astronomer?" queried Villiers.

"That's him," assented the officer, "And, by golly, we certainly need to have the weather cleared up!"

"Well, that's what I'm here to do," announced Villiers confidently, and he pushed the astonished officer to one side. "If you resist me, it will be at your own personal risk."

The two guardians of the peace exchanged glances. Apparently they both decided that Villiers was bluffing. They closed up together, prepared to contest his entrance. But the solution of the problem was in other hands than their own. The mob, upon hearing Villiers' words, surged forward. Phillipa and I found ourselves on the crest of an irresistible wave of humanity. I saw the figures of the two policemen melt away in the rush. The door of the residence burst open suddenly, and I had a hurried glimpse of the terrified face of a man-servant. Then someone seized my arm in a grip of iron, and I found myself, with Phillipa still clinging to me, in a dark hallway. The door banged somehow behind us, and the faint tumultuous murmur of the surging mob came faintly to our ears from the outside.

I noticed then that Villiers was arguing with a scared-looking menial in the passage ahead of us. After a moment or two, he turned round to us and beckoned.

"The Premier will see us right away," he whispered. "And Sir Philip Sims will be there as well. We shall get an expert opinion on our declaration."

I am not able to analyze my feelings clearly at the fateful moment when the door ahead of us opened, admitting us to the presence of the man who guided the nation's destinies. I recognized him immediately. He was short of stature, but well-built. He had a bald head and a very wrinkled face. His eyes were grey and kindly, but very keen.

At the particular moment we entered, he looked worried. There were ominous wrinkles on his forehead. Seated opposite him was a small, fat man with a hooked nose. This man wore a pince-nez, and I knew him immediately to be Sir Philip Sims, who had recently gained much publicity, on account of his discovery of the celebrated Sims' Comet.

The great astronomer glanced at us somewhat superciliously as we faced him. I suppose he was wondering by what right ignorant laymen like ourselves were admitted to a conference of such vital importance. But we were soon to startle him out of his shell of reserve.

The Premier rose to his feet as he caught sight of Phillipa, and motioned us all to take a seat.

"I am informed, gentlemen," he began in a soft voice, "that you wish to see me on important business relevant to the present inexplicable atmospheric disturbance?"

Villiers rose to his feet, and whatever his shortcomings may have been, he certainly always had that indescribable knack for facing any crisis in a calm and collected manner.

"My friends and I have information, sir, which is of the utmost importance to the whole world," he said solemnly. "As you are aware, a great change has come over the earth. During the last couple of days the length of our days and of our nights have been shortened. As Sir Philip Sims must have conjectured, this might be due to a sudden unprecedented reduction in the earth's orbit around the sun. Our very periodicity is changing every minute in relation to the universe around us."

He paused dramatically, and I can still see the uncomprehending expression on the face of the Premier and of the great astronomer.

"My friends here—may I introduce Mr. Gaspard and Miss Eden—and I have authoritative information as to what may be causing this unexampled condition at this very moment.

"Three days ago Edward Eden, one of my best friends and a remarkable scientist, whose works on electro-magnetic activity you must have read, sir, showed us a machine he had perfected, by means of which he hoped to be able to modify the climatic conditions of the earth. This machine was designed to bring the earth nearer to the sun—in other words to shorten the earth's orbit round the sun. He was himself in a precarious state of health, and he con-

fided this secret to us, therefore, that we might, in case of his sudden demise, be able to control the machine."

I saw a little sceptical smile hovering over Sir Philip Sims' face. Villiers continued.

"Three days ago, on the night he revealed this machine to us, Mr. Eden was brutally murdered by a half-crazed tramp. Eden had kept the machine in his laboratory, which he had had fitted up in a natural cave carved out by the sea's action on the chalk cliffs centuries before. He told us that this tramp knew the whereabouts of the machine, and that if anything happened to him, we were to guard the machine—with our lives. When we visited the cave as soon as we discovered our friend had been killed, we found that the machine had disappeared. The day before yesterday, as you must undoubtedly be aware, the influence of this machine began to be felt. This is the third day, sir, and as Sir Philip will be able to inform you, we shall probably approach the solar body more rapidly as time goes on until we reach a point when we shall be drawn very suddenly, within its influence."

VILLIERS sat down rather abruptly, and I saw that Sir Philip Sims was impressed in spite of himself. The Premier sat with hunched shoulders, his head sunk on his chest. Such a catastrophe as this threatened to be, was entirely outside the province of statesmanship.

"What is to be done, Sir Philip?" he asked finally.

"If what Mr. Villiers tells us is true, there is nothing to do but to find the machine," replied Sir Philip.

The Premier raised his head. From without, the roar of a great crowd shouting could be heard faintly.

"How long do you think we have, Sir Philip, before—before the end?"

"Eden calculated that within seven days we should be subjected to unbearable heat, sir," said Villiers.

"But then there is no sure way of calculating, Mr. Villiers," spoke up Sir Philip, "because the earth no longer conforms to any fixed standards. We may be drawn off our orbit and hurled into the sun's influence at any minute."

"Can no trace of the machine be found?" asked the Premier.

"We have searched every part of the grounds, sir," said Villiers, "and the police are searching everywhere every minute of the day. And soon it will be too hot to remain above the ground."

There was a long silence after this remark, and that faint ominous growling sound outside became more noticeable. The Premier stood up, and there were little beads of perspiration on his forehead.

"We are bound to tell the people something," he declared. "The House shall meet tonight. We shall have to determine what policy to pursue in this universal crisis. If we must announce to the world that there will be only seven days more to live, then the papers shall have the story tomorrow. On the other hand, such a frank disclosure of the facts will lead to outbreaks of lawlessness."

He stood still in the middle of the room, his brows contracted in thought.

"Gentlemen, it is a case of knowing human nature," he announced at last, and glanced at each of us with an appraising eye. "What should we ourselves do if we were suddenly informed, without any warning, that we had only ten days, at most, to live? It is said that human nature is the same all the world over.

"I am going to ask each one of you what you would do—or perhaps I should say what you intend to do—with the seven days left at your disposal? The last seven days of your life?"

We were all very silent. You could have heard a pin drop in the room. The ticking of a grandfather clock was distinctly audible.

"Come, Sir Philip," urged the Premier, "you tell us first. What would you do?"

"If I had only ten days more in which to live," echoed the great astronomer with a subtle smile, "I think I should go to my observatory and watch this catastrophe approaching. I should take notes as long as I could in the hope that, should the end miraculously be averted, there would be some sort of authentic record to remind people that the spirit of science is unconquerable."

Brave words, I thought to myself, and I wondered if he really believed that he might have to live up to them within the next few days.

"And you, Mr. Villiers?" asked the Premier.

I saw the old sardonic smile creep over Villiers' features.

"I think I should endeavor to die as I live," he said after a minute's reflection. "To me, the most interesting study in the world is the observation of people. I should like to watch their reactions to this news, and get the results down on paper as a record, even as Sir Philip says—for our successors."

"I think that your reactions would both be abnormal, gentlemen," said the Premier. "Might I be permitted to ask this lady her opinion?" he added, bowing to Phillipa.

The poor girl went as white as a sheet, and my heart went out to her. But she kept her hands folded on her lap, and when she spoke her voice was quite firm.

"If what we all dread is really going to happen, I think I want to go to a secluded place somewhere—to a place where I could pray for all the unhappy souls my brother's folly has condemned. If it were possible for me to offer myself as some sort of sacrifice, I would do—be—"

Her voice broke, and she buried her face in her hands. We all stirred uneasily.

"Come, come, Miss Eden, we need not anticipate the worst yet," spoke up the Premier. "You were nothing but an innocent onlooker—"

Somehow, at that moment, the absurdity of the whole argument struck me. Here we were, four men and one girl, bickering over trifles of no importance, whilst the most stupendous danger that ever threatened the earth was rushing upon us.

"Let us tell the people at once," I said, "It is only fair to them. It is up to every one of us now to get the best out of life before it is too late."

PERHAPS my words carried the requisite weight to move them to action, for my suggestion was no sooner uttered than it was adopted. The Premier rose briskly to his feet.

"You are right," he declared. "It shall be announced at once. In the meanwhile, gentlemen, the search for the machine must be continued unremittingly."

Our audience was at an end, and we left the mansion by a rear door. Our car was still standing in the shadow of the Cenotaph, and it was at this spot that Villiers and I bade each other farewell. Before we parted, we each made a solemn promise to meet in Eden's cave once again before the end.

"In three days' time or less, the heat will have

driven all people underground," I prophesied morbidly. "I want you to promise us that you will be at the cave at the last. We may need you."

"But what are you two going to do?" he asked, with an amused twinkle back of his sour, old eyes.

"We're going to get married," I cried audaciously, and I was glad that I had spoken up when I saw the lovely flush my words brought to Phillipa's face.

"Get married?" he echoed after me, staring like a madman. And then, his sardonic smile breaking out all over his face, he extended his hand and gripped mine. "I wish you the best of luck, old man."

And then he was gone, and Phillipa and I were alone. I took the wheel of the car and sped out of the vast Metropolis, with its myriads of living dead, and out into the comparative freshness of the country. But even here a hot breeze fanned our faces as we left the City behind us, and presently I brought the car to a standstill. I turned to the girl, so still and silent by my side.

"Darling," I whispered, "will you marry me, now?" I saw my answer in her eyes, and put my arms around her and held her very close to me. And even while we sat there, a chill rustling, like the gaunt herald of death, swept through the trees and grass. The sun sank suddenly, without warning, behind the horizon.

But I knew that in a few brief hours it would rise again, and with awful majesty, grip the whole earth in its fiery mantle.

CHAPTER IV

NOW that I try to record the events subsequent to the forecasting of the calamity by the press of the world, I find myself strangely bewildered as to what actually did transpire.

Phillipa and I were married the next day by a perspiring and very much frightened minister, who thought us quite mad.

We had five and a half hours of darkness before the sun rose again, and this time, although the evil was not yet upon us, its actuality could no longer be doubted. When the truth was broadcast in the papers, all the ordinary affairs of men were discarded. Everyone joined in a growing discussion as to the possibility of the oncoming catastrophe. The ordinary human intelligence still refused to credit the truth of such impending danger.

Whilst a large majority were sceptical, there were some who from the start became panic-stricken. Some tried to sell their businesses. All the big factories shut down. Heat made it impossible to continue their operation. A riotous spending of money was apparent everywhere.

The first signs of universal lamentation, horror, and panic came on the morrow, with the first sense of pain. Evidently we had already come within the sun's influence, although the mass of the earth must still have been tending to draw away from the solar gravitational pull, for some component in the air disappeared, making the atmosphere dry and unpleasant, and causing an irritation in the throat and breast whenever one took a breath. A wild fury came over all men. All that was bestial, all that was cowardly and craven, and conversely, all that was pure and fine, made itself manifest.

On the morning of that eventful day I was awakened by the rays of the sun pouring in at my window. I was conscious at once of an unpleasant closeness in the air. My skin was dry and my head ached. I could hear the racing blood pulsing through my system, and I realized that my blood pressure must be abnormally high. I was very thirsty and jumped out of bed to get a drink.

It was at that moment that the increasing magnitude of the sun was brought home to me. It faced us now like a vast sea of flame, stretching like the curve of a rainbow from end to end of the horizon. With unspeakable horror clutching at my breast I saw that a huge flickering, giving the illusion of clouds of smoke passing in front of a bright light, obscured its face partly from us. A wild terror possessed me, and I ran, like the coward I was, back into my bedroom.

I gazed frantically down at the sleeping figure of Phillipa, my wife. I ground my teeth in helpless fury, as I noted the quick unhealthy rise and fall of her bosom, the flushed look on her face, and the dryness of her skin. For the first time in many years I fell on my knees, as millions of others were doing at the same time, and besought God to avert this calamity.

In a couple of hours the heat became unbearable in our room. I carried all the available food and water I could find, down into Eden's cave, the place where Eden had first shown Villiers and me the infernal machine which was now causing all the trouble. It was cooler there than anywhere else, the only outlet being through the opening in the roof, through which we could just see the tops of the two trees in the garden.

One thing I had noted on my way past the windows of the dining-room overlooking the lawn and garden. This was the wild luxuriance of foliage which had burst out upon every growing thing. The leaves were fully out upon every tree. The grass was partially withered. Small growing weeds made their appearance on the walls, on flower pots, and even through crevices in the stone walls and courtyard. Also the air was filled with flies of all sorts, and lice and insects infested every room on the ground floor.

We spent the greater part of the day in the cave, while the earth cracked and yawned above us. I ventured out after sunset, as the sun had finished its now almost headlong descent below the horizon. I was nearly prostrated by the high temperature. A vast billowy cloud of smoke hung over the fields about a mile to our left, and a sudden premonition warned me of the proximity of fire.

I recollected, however, that if there was any fear of fire, Phillipa and I were in the safest possible place, for the smoke and flames would pass over us.

During the night, a long line of automobiles, with their lamps twinkling like speckled eyes through the veil of smoke and darkness, roared along the highway near the house. They carried people from the Metropolis, who were fleeing to the country, where they imagined they would find some sort of shelter from the heat.

The next day witnessed our first sight of death. The carcasses of small birds lay on the withered ground. Unmentionable orgies took place on the streets and in the country meadows. We heard later that there was rioting in the Metropolis. Streets were set on fire. The looting of food shops and grocery stores was universal. Crime and iniquity held their grim sway over all. The Churches also were filled to capacity.

THROUGHOUT that awful time Phillipa and I sat side by side in Eden's cave. There was both faith and confidence in the quietness of her eyes, and I found much solace in her presence.

"I don't believe God will allow such a thing to happen, dear," she remarked quietly that afternoon.

"There is too much goodness in the world for Him to wish to destroy it."

While I was near her, I felt reassured. But when I was alone for a moment I had a dire foreboding. I thought of Villiers' ironical face, and I could not forget the day we were out together on one of our numerous explorations through the slums, when he had quoted rather aptly, pointing out the terrible living conditions of some of the people—"If God loved us all, He wouldn't have made so many of us."

On the morning of the fourth day, I knew that the end could not be far off. The magnitude and glory of the sun was chimerical. From one end of the Heavens to the other, it stretched, a molten hell of blinding flame. During the night, Phillipa and I had crawled out of our cave for a minute to gape, amazed, at the marvelous spectacle of Venus and Mercury, the former flaming with an intense white light in the Heavens, as large as our own Moon usually appeared to us. The latter lay well down on the horizon, and was made invisible to us as the sun rose, on account of its proximity to the solar body.

In the very early morning (if it can be called morning) of the fourth day, an indistinct roaring sound, like the "voice of many waters" became audible. The leaves were withered off the trees, and all animal life seemed to be extinct. Not a sound could be heard from the ground above us. Only from the pigeon house came a persistent cooing sound, which, had I been mentally alert, I would have recognized at once for what it really was. But my senses were half dazed, and I had long ago given up any hope of locating the machine.

Some two hours after the sun rose on that day, I heard a muffled sound from the stone stairway leading down the passage into our retreat. Hastily reassuring Phillipa, I advanced cautiously towards the wooden door admitting us to the passage.

It was Villiers. He had kept his promise. But at what a cost.

I did not recognize him immediately, for in three days, *his hair had turned entirely white.* He seemed thin and emaciated to the point of dissolution. His eyes glowed with the wild fear of a soul in mortal terror of the Unknown. His clothes were torn and smeared with blood. He gave a feeble cackle when he saw me, and then collapsed like a sack of bones on the sandy floor of the cave.

"Quick, dear, water," I gasped to Phillipa, and she took a cup and filled it from our precious store. Supporting his head upon her lap, she dipped her handkerchief into the fluid and squeezed it between his lips.

He sucked at it like a madman, and half way through it I saw him stop, and catch hold of her hand.

"God bless you," he mumbled, and I saw Phillipa turn away. It was the first time I had ever heard Villiers use the name of the Deity to express the best which was within him.

Later on he told us of what was happening in the Metropolis. On the first day, as has been mentioned, all business ceased. On the second day looting and rioting broke out, and all thoughts of law and order were flung to the winds.

"Gaspard," he said, clinging to my arm, "I have seen people do things, which I pictured as possible only in my wildest dreams. The downright goodness of some people—there were people dying every moment to save others pain and misery. I would never have believed that human nature was so sound fundamentally. And the Churches—they're full all the time."

He smiled grimly to himself.

"You were right, Gaspard old friend," he choked, gripping my hand, "you were right after all."

THE sun sank in a blaze of glory. Two hours afterwards, we crawled out into the open. Even then the ground was so scorched that we could scarcely bear the heat through our shoes. Tremendous clouds of smoke obscured the view of everything around us. The roaring sound had grown in volume, so that it became a persistent and terrifying drone. From end to end of the horizon there blazed an ominous flickering of red.

"Tonight will be the last night," Villiers remarked, and I realized that moment that never in this world would he lose his ironical sense of humor. "It seems funny to think that we'll all be dead by this time tomorrow, doesn't it?"

"Do you think that the end will be sudden?" I inquired, much in the same tone that I would have asked him to pass the sugar two weeks ago.

"I think," he replied, after a minute's cogitation, "that unless we collide with something before tomorrow morning, there will be a universal conflagration . . . My God, won't the heat be awful?"

We looked round and became silent as Phillipa approached. She came up to us both and laid a soft hand on our shoulders. Overnight Phillipa, the young girl, had become Phillipa, the woman.

"Dear men," she said, "you have both been very good to me."

We talked for a little while then, and afterwards descended below to make our peace with the Almighty before the dawn came. It was while we were descending the stairs from the hallway to the corridor leading to the cave that Villiers slipped, and fractured a bone in his leg.

We made him as comfortable as we could, but he was in great pain, and groaned for much of the night. After a while he went off into a feverish doze.

The minutes dragged by, and the dawn must have been very near. I think Phillipa and I realized this, for we drew closer together, and I put my arms round her. Presently she dozed, too, but I remained nervously alert, and found myself staring insanely at the cleft through the dome of the ceiling, watching . . . watching for the first signs of sunrise.

As I gazed I think that my mind must have wandered, for extraordinary thoughts and even visions, such as they say come to a man in the throes of drowning, assailed me. I thought of the antiquity of this old world of ours, and of the immense time—scientists say that it is ten million years—which went into its evolution. Even of the solar system, I knew the earth to be a minor member. Compared with the stellar universe we were only an ulta-microscopic speck. The composition of our lithosphere told a story of unremitting change. We were always changing and it might even be possible that this would be the last great change of all—that we were to become in some mysterious way, affiliated with the sun—to become literally Sun-Gods. For since the very beginning of our being, the sun had been with us, working on our surface. In the misty dimness of the pre-cambrian era, the sun had shone down upon the sea-plants, sponges, and worms which formed the sole inhabitants of the earth at that time. And so through the palaeozoic era, when the humble crustacea, first land plants and insects appeared; when during the silurian era fishes and amphibia made their appearance; when reptiles, provided with rocks by the carboniferous era, commenced to crawl; when birds and flowering plants were able to exist through the Jurassic and Cretaceous

periods; and when Mammalia commenced to multiply . . . through all these eras, through many millions of years, the sun had done its faithful duty.

For, by the light of the sun, those changes were accomplished which enabled life to evolute. And there could be no doubt that the first man, primitive creature though he must have been, sunned himself in the gentle solar heat, and afterwards worshipped the source of much life and light.

PERHAPS, as all these thoughts flashed through my mind, I realized that we were not meant to be snuffed out of existence like this. The sun's job was not yet finished. Science, working hand in hand with truth, had many more things to accomplish . . . And even while I was dreaming thus, a pale, fiery tint shot across the sky. It was the last of the day.

At that moment also my eyes became rivetted in amazement on the Heavens above me.

As I said before, I could see the tops of two trees from my recumbent position in the cave. One of these trees, the one on which the pigeon cote was built, seemed to be swaying dangerously. It was as if something or somebody were attempting to climb up the trunk, but had not the strength to do so. While I was staring at this, I became suddenly aware that I could still hear the faint persistent cooing of the pigeons within. It was not exactly a cooing, but now as I listened more closely, it began to resemble a low humming sound, a low drone, like the buzzing of a giant bee.

In a flash . . . I knew! It was the humming . . . it was the buzzing—for I knew that no creature could live in that terrific heat—it was the droning of machinery. In that cote, up that tree was hidden *the machine, the machine that could save the world.*

I gripped Phillipa in a clasp of iron. She opened her eyes in terror, and shrank away from such vehemence.

"God give me strength, Phillipa," I gasped, for it had become suddenly very hot. "I've got to climb that tree."

I saw the frantic look of incredulity on her face change to something else. She thought I was a madman.

"Dear heart," I whispered, for my breath was wheezing from me in my excitement, "I'm not mad. You've got to help me climb that tree. *The machine is in that tree.*"

I saw scepticism wrestling with conviction in her eyes. And then I saw that conviction had won. She rose to her feet and we rushed giddily together towards the stairs leading up to the hallway. And then we both stopped together, petrified, frozen to the spot with terror. For facing us from the doorway, leering at us diabolically with bloodshot eyes, was Greely—Greely the madman, murderer of Eden.

Phillipa shrank back with a scream of horror. I stood, with beating heart, and faced the madman. I knew that he would have a maniac's strength, and that my feeble efforts against his would be useless. I had never been robust at the best of times, and this man's strength would now be equal to two men. My only hope lay in Villiers' steely wiriness. And Villiers lay with a broken leg—helpless.

Phillipa's scream had aroused him, and he had raised himself on one arm, and was trying to scare Greely with his terrible eyes. But the man was too demented now to be frightened by anything less than brute force.

"I've got you now—all of you," he shrieked in demoniacal fury. "You thought you had me—but I've got the lot of you now."

"Villiers, old man," I said in as natural a tone as I could muster. "I have discovered that the machine is in the pigeon house up the tree. Phillipa will help you climb while I head him off from the doorway. Try and slip through when I engage him, and I will keep him down here if I can."

I saw Phillipa, out of the corner of my eye, for I never stopped watching Greely, cross over to Villiers, and he groaned as she helped him to his feet. Then I sprang blindly at Greely and felt for his throat.

As soon as we closed, I knew that his maniac's strength would be too much for me. To and fro we swayed. He forced me back on the floor, and his great fetid hands tore at my throat. But I saw Villiers and Phillipa slip through the doorway.

I had Greely's shaggy hair in both hands now, and I held on to it with all my might. I felt it rip and tear as it came out in handfuls. But still I held on with all my strength, for upon my grip depended the fate of the entire world . . . I held on until my sight grew dim, and until little sparks of light danced before my eyes, and a vast humming filled my ears . . . preceding oblivion.

SUBCONSCIOUSLY I knew that the sun had risen, and that the hand of the Almighty was upon us! Across the sky from horizon to horizon, for the first time in the history of the world, the vast aura of gaseous flame which girdles the sun, could be seen. But still, for some marvelous reason, the earth continued to pull away from the sun, so that if the power of the machine was throttled, there was a chance that we should swing very rapidly back into our orbit.

An unbearable heat burst upon us. Perspiration burst out upon me. My body grew limp, and so did that of my adversary. A furious delirium possessed me as I heard the sound of the beating of my own heart. I caught a glimpse through a red mist of a black figure swaying backwards and forwards on the top of the tree outside the cave.

. . . Suddenly Greely was thrown violently from me. Like a catapult he was precipitated against the rocky walls of the cave, and I heard his skull crack like a nut. A cataclysmic convulsion shook the earth. The ground beneath my feet trembled, and I heard a great moaning like the rush of a mighty wind.

Sick and giddy, I turned my eyes towards the ceiling. I saw that the pigeon cote had been battered in, and that a torn and shapeless thing, oddly like the figure of a man, hung from the tangled tatter of glittering bulbs and globes suspended from the tree . . . Villiers had fulfilled his last great trust faithfully . . . And I knew also that we were saved . . . saved! And I fainted away.

When I came to, I was still lying on the floor of the cave. A great quiet surrounded me, but above, through the vent in the dome of the ceiling, I could hear a rushing, dripping sound. It was raining outside, and it continued to rain for three whole days.

Somehow I managed to stagger up those steps and fetch Phillipa's inert body into the dryness of the cave. We remained there until the rain stopped—three days later. Then we emerged to gaze on a curiously quiet and brown-looking world. Not a vestige of verdure remained.

It seems impossible now, all that I have told, when I sit in the cool glory of sunlight in our garden. But I am never sceptical nowadays of what scientists tell me. For theirs is a great mission—a mission never to be fulfilled until Heaven and earth pass away.

THE END.

The Menace

By DAVID H. KELLER, M. D.

(*Concluded from page* 417)

on to say that these men were taken to the edge of the city in an automobile and started out on their exploration. They had a wireless with them so they could report their observations as they went along.

"Then came the most astonishing thing!

"There was not anything to report!

"There were no insane people!

"But here and there, all over the city, and in the rooms and halls of the houses were little piles of dust, with now and then a gold tooth or a filling. That is what made them understand. See what had happened. The gold filling amid the little piles of dust. Then scientists were sent in, trained observers and chemists. They studied the entire problem from every point and they finally arrived at one conclusion:

"They reported that during all these years, the sleepers had been slowly using up their store of vitality, or energy, or whatever it was that kept them alive. Then, when the drug was changed, they became awake and started in to walk and talk and probably fight. This required a great amount of energy. In a short time they expended all they had. They simply dried up and died. There must have been something else, however, as there was not a trace of clothing or bone left and the scientists felt that there had been a spontaneous combustion of some kind. They could not explain it, but the dried bodies must have burned because around every little pile of white ash there was a trace of carbon, especially noticed on the streets.

"The Government is making an elaborate report on the matter for distribution, but I have not received a copy. What I have told you is just a preliminary statement Washington has sent out by radio to the newspapers."

"Then nothing happened? The sane people were not harmed?"

"No. Of course they might have been if the awakened insane had lived longer in that excited state, but they died too soon to do any damage."

"But what will the Government do to the new cases of insanity?"

"That is the interesting thing. They believe that there are going to be no more new cases. For nearly forty years every person that was criminal, alcoholic, syphilitic or with psychosis was put to sleep. They had no children. Only the superior adults, perfectly clean in soul and body, were allowed to marry. The specialists say there will be no more mental diseases in the United States because there will be nothing to produce them. We live in the open, avoid the use of glass, bathe in sunlight and live clean."

Taine scratched his head in deep thought. Finally he said:

"We shall not have to even take care of the sleepers any more?"

"No. There are no more sleepers and there will be no more!"

Taine laughed at that:

"It seems often that there really is a controlling destiny. Every time these criminals started to harm our country it ended in good. It makes me more of a Presbyterian than ever."

"Have you been able to find out anything about them?"

"Yes," Taine replied, seriously. "I know that they will never bother us any more. Still, I am sorry about that, in a way. I always felt so well when I was after them. Seemed somehow that it kept me young. Perhaps, though, I can find something else to keep me busy, even if the United States is one hundred per cent perfect. Can you tell me when the next steamer sails for California? I am anxious to see my children, and grandchildren and most of all, my wife."

In the years that followed, Ebony Kate delighted in telling the little Taines how their grandfather and she had fought those white-black-boogers. Whenever they asked him for the truth of the stories, he always said that old Mammy knew as much about it all as he did.

THE END.

Your Viewpoint

EQUILIBRIUM AND FLOATATION IN THE "NEW ATLANTIS."

Editor, AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY,

I have been an enthusiastic reader of your magazine, both Monthly and QUARTERLY, since the first issues. I am wholly in favor of your present method of publication, and I consider the stories to be first rate in their line.

But—now comes the dirt—I have been grinding my teeth at a few stories you have published, which insult the name of scientifiction. The latest of these, the one which is bringing forth this literary effort, is the "New Atlantis." I don't profess to be a physicist, but I know that the entire principle of the seaport which the author describes, is absolutely impractical. The principle of floating bodies is the displacement of their own weight of water; that is, a body will float if it displaces its own, or more than its own weight of water, and will sink if it displaces less.

Now Mr. Hodge has a number of steel bottles which are hollow and equipped with seacocks and air pumps. These displace more than their weight of water, and consequently are buoyant. On these is balanced a heavy structure which forces them down until they are forty feet below the surface. Their buoyancy delicately balances the heavy superstructure. Even granting that this nice balance could be obtained by the use of the air pumps and sea cocks on the bottles, the slightest weight, even a small airplane, will disturb this equilibrium, and will sink the structure in a short time unless a very attentive engineer again establishes balance. There is no reserve buoyancy in a steel pontoon which just displaces its own weight, and a slight additional weight will inevitably sink it. I would be very much gratified to see Mr. Hodge or anybody else disprove this principle with any model built as he has explained. In fact I would be willing to believe anything, after such a demonstration.

Again, the author says that one-third of the bottles will float the structure; yet all are in use. Back to the old principle. An object displacing more than its own weight of water will float. Hence the bottles will come to the surface just as sure as Archimedes, and I wouldn't envy Mr. Hodge his position on board his topheavy seaport.

Mr. Hodge can write, though, I must say, and aside from his poor physics the story is very well written. I hope to see more of his work.

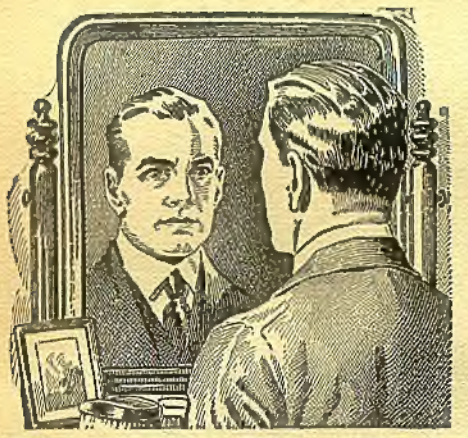
The editor is to be commended for his selection of material for the magazine. Some of the authors I like particularly are: H. G. Wells, a top-notch fiction writer, but a poor historian; Jules Verne, Edgar Allan Poe, Garrett P. Serviss, A. Hyatt Verrill, Fitz-James O'Brien. Mr. Gernsback's "Baron Münchhausen" contains excellent science and logic.

"The Green Splotches" was the best story published in the MONTHLY, in my opinion, but had a rather weak ending.

I hope that this letter is not too long or too dull to merit space in your Reader's department of the QUARTERLY.

Daniel J. Pflaum,
2560 Pierce St., Omaha, Neb.

(The hydraulics and theory of floatation of the seaport is absolutely correct. The standards which rise from the submerged pontoons are what take care of the varying weights of airplanes; the object of having the pontoons immersed to a great depth is to cause the island in very great part to be removed from the effects of the ocean waves. The great pontoons are submerged in almost motionless water and the principle involved is analogous closely to that of the floating, whistling buoy. Its principle would be carried out in a way by whistling buoys floated upside down. The large submerged pontoons steady it; the tubes supporting the upper structure by rising or subsiding, take care of the airplanes. A rather large model actually built by its inventor, Mr. Armstrong, substantiates this theory fully.—EDITOR.



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Friendly Criticisms of Our Stories

Editor, AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY,

Have just finished reading the second edition of the AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, which I received yesterday, and it is in every way 100 per cent better than the first. Keep it up. I note it is not quite as far behind time as the first, so I believe you will soon catch up, and get all editions of it out on time.

Following is in discussion of the contents of the first (Winter) edition:

The best story, to my young mind was "The Moon of Doom"; it certainly was an aid to my vocabulary, and there was not a dry moment in its reading. Best of luck to Mr. Bell. The story had just about the right length for a tale of its kind, I think. The science in its was excellent, especially the treatment of the atmospheric cone between the moon and earth. But how would the moon's approach to the earth cause the latter to speed up on its axis? I think the increased tidal drag would cause the opposite effect.

"When the Sleeper Wakes" came in a close second; Mr. Wells was at his best in it. The idea of the Moving Ways must certainly be very good, since a number of your other authors have followed it.

"The Atomic Riddle" was a great help in my chemistry. (I'm taking it at the Senior High, now, and it brushed up my knowledge of atomic characteristics and structure.)

"The Golden Vapor" was a little drawn out for the action, but it seemed to fit in anyway. While the purpose of the hero is the same as in "Radio Mates," the treatment is entirely different.

"The Puzzle Duel" and "The Terrors of the Upper Air" were both intensely interesting.

And now, ye second edition falls under the hatchet.

The best story in it, and the best story I have read since "The Moon Pool" is "The Second Swarm" of Mr. Schlossel. It is a distinct departure from the ordinary stories of that kind. For this reason it seems much more plausible than the other stories I have read of the same type. The bringing in of music made it entirely beautiful, for I sense a close connection between music and the thoughts. The last two *motifs* from the overture to "William Tell" seem to fit in particularly well here, especially the second from the last. You have heard these, I am certain, and a little listening on the phonograph will bear out what I mean. Again I wish to commend the author. Long live Mr. Schlossel!

"A Modern Atlantis" was a close runner-up. It seemed to be the most likely story of all of them. The idea of releasing protons for the purpose has not been ventured upon by any other author to my knowledge.

"The Vibrator of Death" came next as an absorbing short story. The paragraph on the effect of rapid vibration on the heart was the best feature of the story in my estimation.

And now, "The Nth Man" of Mr. Flint. It is an entirely original piece, although I expected it to be somewhat like Mr. Wertenbaker's "The Man From the Atom," but it was entirely different. Here are a few questions on certain features of Mr. Flint's story:

When Mr. Pendleton ("The Nth Man") reached a weight of a few hundred tons, how was he able to obtain his supply of chemicals for sustaining the glandular stimulus causing his prodigious growth? A probable answer might be that these chemicals were cheap and common. Also, when he became a few miles in height, wouldn't his voice become proportionately low in pitch so that it would sound not like ordinary speaking as heard through an amplifier, but like a series of terrific bursts of thunder, with no intelligible words? But enough of that. It is sufficient to say that the story beats any I have read for a long time, and it is due for many more readings.

Mr. Verrill's "The King of the Monkey Men" was better than many of his stories, even though it resembled "Through the Crater's Rim" somewhat. (I'm sure I'll disqualify myself dragging AMAZING STORIES into this letter.)

Now I'll use the rest of the space in "Your Viewpoint" to other aspiring correspondents like me (If this ever lands in it). It probably won't, because this letter contains nearly all favorable criticism, which I know you have become tired of.

Best of luck to the QUARTERLY.

Francis D. Uffleman,
Camden, N. J.

(This letter speaks for itself and we are almost afraid to publish it because it is so complimentary. We certainly are delighted to have elicited such a letter from one who is evidently a thinking reader and it is to this class of reader that our stories are particularly addressed. It is a little curious that "The Nth Man," which has been criticized unfavorably by some of our readers, pleases you in spite of the discrepancies which you find in it. It certainly is not easy to combine imagination with mathematical exactness and we candidly think that our authors produce a very good blend of these qualities, opposite as they are in nature.

With reference to the question of speed of rotation of the earth, which you ask about, we quote from the astronomy text book "The Splendor of the Heavens":

"The sun and moon pull all portions of the earth towards them, but they pull most strongly those portions that are nearest to them. The result is a certain distortion of the earth's surface; this takes place even in the solid ground, but the mobile water of the ocean yields more readily, and so shows more tidal motion. These tides act to a very small degree as a brake on the earth's rotation, which is becoming slightly slower; as a result, the moon is very slowly increasing its distance from the earth."

This implies that if the moon were brought nearer to the earth, the earth would have to rotate faster to carry out the law expressed in the quotation. This view is accepted by all astronomers.—EDITOR)

Good Variety in Amazing Stories

Editor, AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY,

I have been a reader of AMAZING STORIES since the first issue. I have never missed a copy yet, and I must say it is a great deal improved. I always thought original material is much better in a current magazine, because most followers of scientifiction have already read most of "Wells" and "Verne" stories. I don't think we get enough of the magazine. I think it should be a "Semi-Monthly"; it's a long time between QUARTERLIES.

I like the variety in AMAZING STORIES—a little of each—and I certainly do enjoy the humorous stories. I don't think there's anything more entertaining than a humorous Scientifiction story. I think the greatest story you ever printed was "The Second Deluge."

Francis Vaillancourt,
91 Fisher Avenue,
White Plains, N. Y.

(We received many opposed opinions on the frequency of publication of AMAZING STORIES, some wanting it every month, and others twice a month. We thought we made a happy compromise in publishing an enlarged QUARTERLY, cutting the Gordian knot, by striking a rough average and giving sixteen issues every year. The QUARTERLY and MONTHLY are kept separate, being really two distinct publications. The specific object of the QUARTERLY is to take care of longer stories and to give them complete in each issue.—EDITOR)

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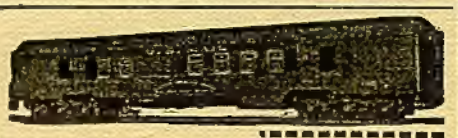

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They Laughed When I Sat Down At the Piano But When I Started to Play!—

ARTHUR had just played "The Rosary." The room rang with applause. I decided that this would be a dramatic moment for me to make my début. To the amazement of all my friends, I strode confidently over to the piano and sat down.

"Jack is up to his old tricks," somebody chuckled. The crowd laughed. They were all certain that I couldn't play a single note.

"Can he really play?" I heard a girl whisper to Arthur.

"Heavens, no!" Arthur exclaimed. "He never played a note in all his life....But just you watch him. This is going to be good."

I decided to make the most of the situation. With mock dignity I drew out a silk handkerchief and lightly dusted off the keys. Then I rose and gave the revolving piano stool a quarter of a turn, just as I had seen an imitator of Paderewski do in a vaudeville sketch.

"What do you think of his execution?" called a voice from the rear.

"We're in favor of it!" came back the answer and the crowd rocked with laughter.

Then I Started to Play

Instantly a tense silence fell on the guests. The laughter died on their lips as if by magic. I played through the first few bars of Liszt's immortal Liebesträume. I heard gasps of amazement. My friends sat breathless—spellbound!

I played on and as I played I forgot the people around me. I forgot the hour, the place, the breathless listeners. The little world I lived in seemed to fade—seemed to grow dim—unreal. Only the music was real. Only the music and the visions it brought me. Visions as beautiful and as changing as the wind-blown clouds and drifting moonlight that long ago inspired the master composer. It seemed as if the master musician himself were speaking to me—speaking through the medium of music—not in words but in chords. Not in sentences but in exquisite melodies!

A Complete Triumph!

As the last notes of the Liebestraume died away, the room resounded with a sudden roar of applause. I found myself surrounded by excited faces. How my friends carried on! Men shook my hand—wildly congratulated me—pounded me on the back in their enthusiasm! Everybody was exclaiming with delight—plying me with rapid questions..."Jack! Why didn't you tell us you could play like that?" . . . Where *did* you learn? — "How long have you studied?" — "Who *was* your teacher?"

"I have never even *seen* my teacher," I replied. "And just a short while ago I couldn't play a note."

"Quit your kidding," laughed Arthur, himself an accomplished pianist. "You've been studying for years. I can tell."

"I have been studying only a short while," I insisted. "I decided to keep it a secret so that I could surprise all you folks."

Then I told them the whole story.

"Have you ever heard of the U. S. School of Music?" I asked.

A few of my friends nodded. "That's a correspondence school isn't it?" they exclaimed.

"Exactly," I replied. "They have a new simplified method that can teach you to play any instrument by note in just a few months."

How I Learned to Play Without a Teacher

And then I explained how for years I had longed to play the piano.

"It seems just a short while ago," I continued, "that I saw an interesting ad of the U. S. School of Music mentioning a new method of learning to play which only averaged a few cents a day! The ad told how a woman had learned to play the piano in her spare time at home—and *without a teacher!* Best of all the wonderful new method she used, required no laborious scales—no heartless exercises—no tiresome practising. It sounded so convincing that I filled out the coupon requesting the Free Demonstration Lesson.

"The free book arrived promptly and I started in that very night to study the Demonstration Lesson. I was amazed to see how easy it was to play this new way. Then I sent for the course. "When the lessons started I found it was just as the ad said—as easy as A.B.C! And, as the lessons continued they got easier and easier. Before I knew it I was playing all the pieces I like best. I soon will be able to play ballads or classical numbers or jazz, all with equal ease! And I never did have any special talent for music!"

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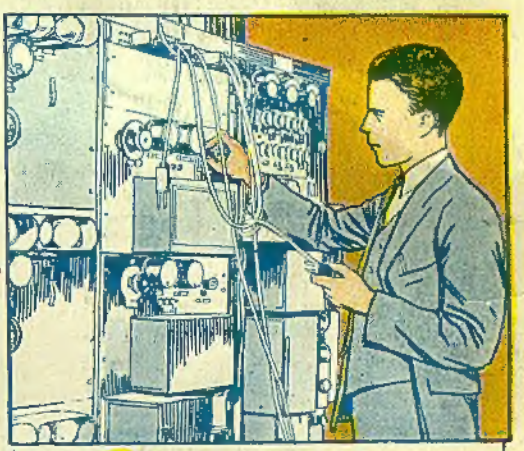

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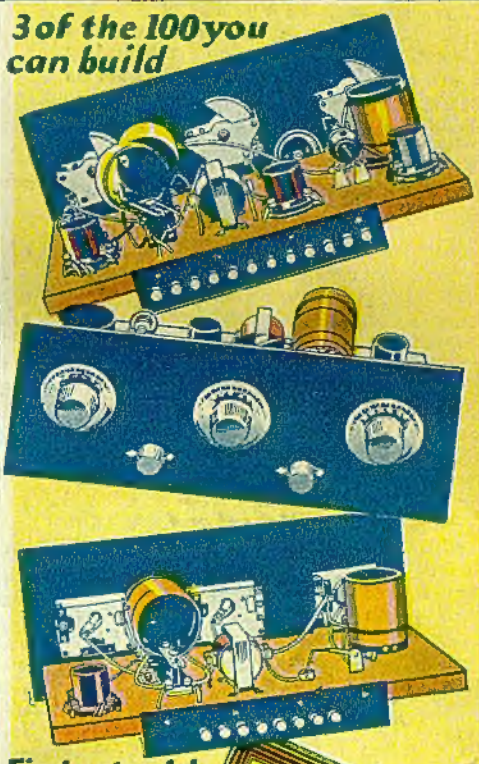

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